NYC'S GREEN NEW DEAL - P8 • AI IN THE SCHOOLS - P16 • MLK REVISITED - P18

THE INDYPENDENT
#297 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2025

KENJONBRO

STREET SOCIALISM

IT'S COMING TO A NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR YOU

BY NICHOLAS POWERS — PAGE 10

THE INDYPENDENT

THE INDYPENDENT, INC.
388 Atlantic Ave, 2nd Fl
Brooklyn, NY 11217
917-426-4856
www.indypendent.org
X: @TheIndypendent
Instagram: theindypendent

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Ellen Davidson
Anna Gold
Alina Mogilyanskaya
Ann Schneider
John Tarleton

EDITOR - IN - CHIEF
John Tarleton

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Elsie Carson-Holt

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Ellen Davidson
Theodore Hamm
Alina Mogilyanskaya
Nicholas Powers

DESIGN DIRECTOR
Mikael '50' Tarkela

CALENDAR EDITOR
Lane Dibler

GENERAL INQUIRIES
CONTACT
@INDYPENDENT.ORG

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS
Linda Martín Alcoff, Eleanor J. Bader, Bennett Baumer, Sue Brisk, Renée Feltz, Lynne Foster, Amba Guerguerian, Esteban Guerra, Theodore Hamm, David Hollenbach, Felipe Jimenez, Chase Kihn, Derek Ludovici, Ash Marinaccio, Gary Martin, Luce Miyar-Mullan, Eva Moschitto, Ariana Orozco, Eli Recht-Appel, Reverend Billy, Farzaneh Sarafraz, Adrita Talukder, Huey Tarpon, John Teufel, and Tyrone Wallace

VOLUNTEER DISTRIBUTORS
Isabella Array, Jackie Aude, Eric Brelsford, Mikaela Charalambous, Dusty Cristan, Hank Dombrowski, Joseph Esposito, Lew Friedman, Priscilla Grim, Caleb Jones, Mahmoud Kasim, John Lawhead, Christine Miller, Jamir Munoz, Tom O'Keefe, Caroline Rath, Amanda Vender, and Nanette Whetstone

CALENDAR

DUSTY CRISTAN

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER

ONGOING • FREE
USE YOUR EBT AT GROWNYC FARMERS MARKET
Now that it's summer, farm stands at the many local farmers markets around the city will have new produce to offer! You can use your food stamps at the market. Find the market information tent (each GROWNYC market has one) and ask for help getting market tokens with your SNAP card. Find a nearby market at grownyc.org/greenmarket/ourmarkets or call (212) 788-7900.

SAT • 10AM–12PM • FREE
FREE WEEKLY FARM STANDS
First come, first served fresh farm grown produce for the community.
HARLEM GROWN (134TH ST. FARM)
116 West 134th St
MNHTN

PRESENT–JAN 25, 2026 • 10AM–5PM • NYC RESIDENT PAY WHAT YOU WISH
CASA SUSANA
Casa Susanna brings together photographs and publications created by and for a community of cross-dressers who met regularly in New York City and the Catskill Mountains throughout the 1960s. The exhibition also features issues of Transvestia, an underground magazine that published the photographs along with fiction, poetry, makeup and clothing advice, and autobiographical essays by members of the community.
THE METROPOLITIAN MUSEUM OF ART
The Met Fifth Avenue in Gallery 852
MNHTN

THU AUG 21 • 7:30–9:00PM • FREE
LOVE 2 LOVE YOU - DONNA SUMMER TRIBUTE
The Nikki Torres band is back again with her vibrant, explosive, exciting tribute to the Queen of Disco. Join in a free night of rhythms and groove with friends and family.
GEORGE SEUFFERT, SR. BANDSHELL IN FOREST PARK
Woodhaven Boulevard & Forest Drive
QNS

MON AUG 25 • 7PM • $18 GENERAL, $7 REDUCED
PORTRAIT OF JASON
As part of the IFC series, 'Milestone Films: A 35th Anniversary Celebration in 35mm' - "Portrait of Jason" showcases a night of intrigue. Over 12 straight hours the one-and-only Jason Holliday was filmed in the Chelsea Hotel. There he spun tales, sang, donned costumes and reminisced about good times and bad behavior as a gay hustler, sometime houseboy and aspiring cabaret performer. Run time: 105 min
IFC CENTER
323 6th Ave
MNHTN

THU AUG 28 • 7:00–8:00PM • FREE
QUEENS JAZZ TRAIL CONCERT: MINGUS BIG BAND
This free concert series brings the borough's rich jazz history to life in beautiful community parks–where legends like Armstrong, Coltrane, Fitzgerald, and more once called home. Mingus Big Band celebrates the music of legendary bassist and composer Charles Mingus with electrifying performances by top-tier jazz musicians.
THE MUSICIANS OVAL IN ARCHIE SPIGNER PARK
Sayres Ave &, 172nd St
QNS

FRI AUG 29 • 8 PM • $18 GENERAL, $7 REDUCED
GOD SAID GIVE 'EM DRUM MACHINES
The story behind Detroit's great contribution to the world; Techno! This electronic genre of music was found by Black artists in the 1980s that transformed dance music into a completely new sound!
MAYSLES DOCUMENTARY CENTER
343 Malcolm X Boulevard
MNHTN

MON SEP 1 • ALL DAY • FREE
WEST INDIAN-AMERICAN CARNIVAL AND PARADE
Come down and celebrate the most lively celebration in Brooklyn. Carnival is a vibrant celebration of Caribbean culture that takes over Eastern Parkway annually. An absolutely massive event, drawing an estimated one to three million participants, to dance, enjoy steel-pan and calypso bands, and devour Caribbean food.
GRAND ARMY PLAZA
10 Grand Army Plz
BKYN

TUE SEP 9 • 6:30–7:30PM • FREE
THE FUTURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
Join this distinguished panel of authors, scholars, and journalists including Richard Kahlenberg, Jason Riley, Nicholas Lemann, and Justin Driver as they discuss three possible futures for affirmative action in college admissions.
STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION LIBRARY (7th floor)
455 5th Ave
MNHTN

MON SEP 15 • 8:30PM–MIDNIGHT • FREE
REV. VINCE ANDERSON & THE LOVE CHOIR!
Don't miss the eclectic gospel sounds of ordained Reverend Vince Anderson
UNION POOL
484 Union Ave
BKYN

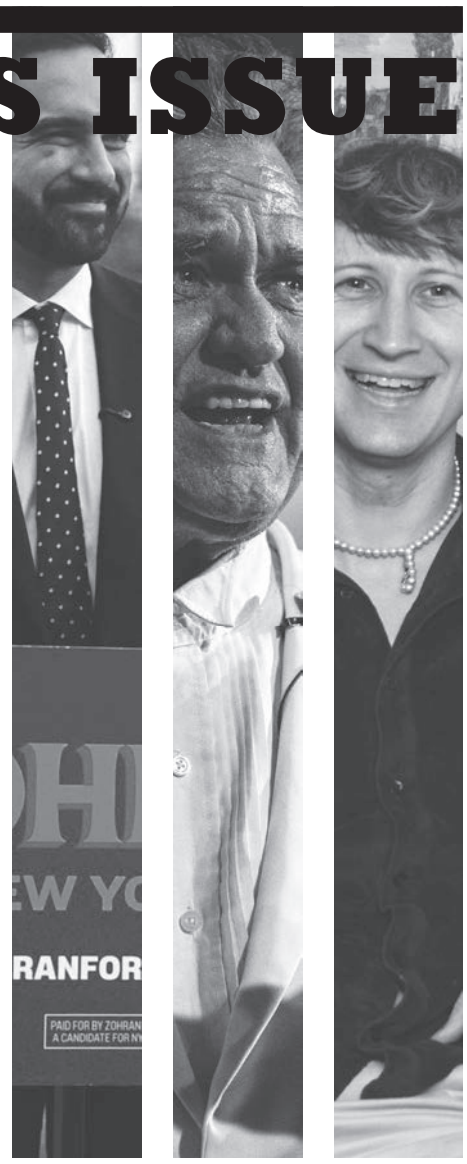
FRI SEP 19 • 4PM, 8PM • SUGGESTED DONATION
BREAD AND PUPPET: OUR DOMESTIC RESURRECTION REVOLUTION IN PROGRESS
Journeying from the Green Mountains of Vermont the dazzling Bread and Puppet circus returns to the Big Apple. This show draws on traditional circus tropes and puppetry to draw attention to the urgent issues of the day. Stilt dancers, paper maché beasts of all sizes and a riotous brass band make a raucous, colorful spectacle of protest and celebration.
OLD STONE HOUSE OF BROOKLYN
336 3rd Street
BKYN

SAT SEP 20 10AM–6PM • PAY AS YOU GO
DRAGON FEST
An annual outdoor Chinese food & culture festival with experiential activities, tastings, and market fairs that showcases the vibrant food, art and cultural traditions from China. It is a cultural platform that connects people in New York to Chinese restaurants, food vendors, artists and local communities.
Broadway 113-114th Street

OCEAN VIEW: *The Rockaways remains one of NYC's most beloved summer destinations.*

ADVERTISE IN THE INDY
> GREAT RATES <
> UNIQUE AUDIENCE <
> PERSONAL ATTENTION FROM US <
> HIGH-QUALITY DESIGN AT NO EXTRA CHARGE <
917-426-4856 • ADS@INDYPENDENT.ORG

IN THIS ISSUE



4 NYC BRIEFS
The Cuomo-Trump alliance, Sunday library service, NY Post expands to the West Coast.

4 REVEREND BILLY'S REVELATIONS
How to stay grounded and strong in these trying times.

5 AFFORDABILITY APP
Calculate how much money you could save under Mayor Mamdani.

6 READY FOR CHANGE
We visit the most leftwing neighborhood in the city to find out why it voted so hard for Zohran.

7 POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION
A former Andrew Cuomo aide reflects on her journey from Albany insider to DSA member.

8 GREEN NEW YORK
Two longtime climate organizers describe how a Mamdani administration could transform NYC.

10 STREET SOCIALISM
Nicholas Powers explores how Zohran Mamdani's mayoral campaign has ignited hope in working class communities of color.

13 TAKEN FOR A RIDE
An ambulance EMT reflects on her patients who will be harmed by massive Republican budget cuts to Medicaid.

14 NO WILL TO FIGHT
Ivy League universities are easy marks for Trump because they believe in nothing.

15 PRO-PALESTINE PROFS FIRED
Four Brooklyn College adjunct faculty fired for their pro-Palestine views are fighting to get their jobs back.

16 AI IN THE SCHOOLS
Welcoming artificial intelligence into the classroom will do far more harm than good.

18 KING OF THE NORTH
Martin Luther King Jr.'s activism extended far beyond the Jim Crow South.

Amy Goodman | Juan González | Nermeen Shaikh

Independent Global News

Tune in to Democracy Now!'s daily news hour for the latest in-depth interviews, analysis, historical perspectives and substantive debates on the most pressing issues of the day.

Visit

DEMOCRACYNOW.ORG

DEMOCRACY NOW!

Daily Public TV / Radio / Internet News Hour

Subscribe to the Daily News Digest

Follow us @ democracynow

BROADCAST ON MORE THAN 1,500 PUBLIC TV AND RADIO STATIONS WORLDWIDE

Never Again to Nuclear War! Embrace the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons!

As we mark the 80th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – we urge U.S. leadership to abolish nuclear weapons, reduce nuclear risk, ban explosive tests, and ensure justice for impacted communities. It's time for a safer, nuclear-free future.

Please urge your representatives to support the congressional Back from the Brink resolutions: House Resolution 317 and Senate Resolution 323.

Learn more & take action:
bit.ly/res317res323

BACK FROM THE BRINK
THE CALL TO PREVENT NUCLEAR WAR

BROOKLYN FOR PEACE
388 Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn NY 11217
brooklynpeace.org | 718-624-5921

NYC BRIEFS

BY INDYPENDENT STAFF

KARA MCCURDY

ON MESSAGE: *Zohran Mamdani speaks at a June 24 press conference.*

WILL TRUMP INTERCEDE AGAINST MAMDANI?

Donald Trump is considering intervening to try to stop Democrat Zohran Mamdani from being elected mayor, and has spoken to New York political figures including Andrew Cuomo and billionaire John Catsimatidis about the race, the *New York Times* reported Aug. 6. "Today we learned Andrew Cuomo is directly coordinating with Donald Trump, even as this President sends masked agents to rip our neighbors off the streets and guts the social services so many New Yorkers rely on," Mamdani responded on X. The race should be about "who will make the city affordable," he told reporters, "not an audition for the best jester for Donald Trump and his billionaire supporters." Meanwhile, a Zenith/Public Progress Solutions poll released July 29 found Mamdani with 50%-22% lead over Andrew Cuomo among likely voters, with Republican Curtis Sliwa third at 13%. Neither Cuomo, incumbent Eric Adams, nor Sliwa have so far shown any willingness to drop out. Mamdani's campaign will resume its massive door-to-door canvassing effort on Sunday August 17.

NYC SUNDAY LIBRARY SERVICE EXPANDS

Eleven more city public libraries will be open on Sundays beginning Sept. 7. The expanded hours are the result of $2 million in dedicated funding added to the city budget in March, spearheaded by City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams after Mayor Eric Adams' proposed cuts to library services provoked outrage. The 11 libraries are the Mott Haven, Baychester, and Kingsbridge branches in the Bronx; Bay Ridge and Bedford in Brooklyn; Harlem in Manhattan; St. George in Staten Island; and Glen Oaks, Hunters Point, Jackson Heights, and Rochdale Village in Queens. The city now has more than 30 libraries open on Sundays. "They never should've been closed in the first place," Democratic mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani said on X Aug. 5. "As Mayor, I'll end this absurd budget dance that keeps our beloved libraries in limbo year after year."

NEW YORK POST TO EXPAND TO CALIFORNIA

As if floods, wildfires, traffic jams, and ICE kidnappings weren't bad enough, Southern California will soon be getting another plague: Rupert Murdoch's media empire plans to launch a Los Angeles-based version of the *New York Post* early next year. The *California Post* will have both a daily print edition and online multimedia. Australian Nick Papps will be the California publication's editor-in-chief, while *New York Post* editor-in-chief Keith Poole will oversee it. The Post's online readers are overwhelmingly from outside New York, with Los Angeles having the second-largest concentration of them, according to Murdoch's News Corporation. "Yet many stories are not being told, and many viewpoints are not being represented," Poole said in a statement. Well, as long as L.A. has a black woman Democrat as mayor, expect lots of screaming "TERROR" headlines about crime being out of control, plus plenty of cheerleading for those ICE kidnappings.

REVEREND BILLY'S REVELATIONS

RICHARD SWAFFORD

Dear Rev,
I feel like the evil wave of terror is still gaining strength right now… but somehow I believe that it subsides and break from lots of people saying No! Then again, a feeling of helplessness overwhelms everything…. Our resistance seems slow. I don't know.

— DEBORAH

Dear Deborah,
A lot of us share your feelings. Are we still paralyzed by the new sensation of actual criminals running the Justice Department? How do we resist beyond our parades and Youtube posts? This very day more goons will be pulling our neighbors from courtrooms in the federal building by Foley Square.

I'm gonna raise $100 million and make a movie called "The Return of the Woke Monsters." We have worked on ourselves to be more aware of our privilege while learning from Black Lives Matter and MeToo and LGBTQ+ and the differently abled and the crisis of the Earth… Yeah, waking up from nightmares is what we did. One of Trump's most glaring lies is his declarations that his violent arrests have reversed what justice means in American life. But many of us altered our beliefs and actions with deep personal change, and the thugs can't touch that.

We have physically woken up. Our justice work is in our bodies and it is strong. Maybe some of our political soul is in hiding, but we will return. When Zorhan Mamdani sits with the grieving family of the murdered policeman Didarul Islam, we sense the hidden justice emerging.

Stay strong!
BILLY

■ ■ ■

Rev Billy
I was in an airport with crowds of travelers and the harsh intercoms. It was the most ordinary kind of thing. Suddenly I had a chilling thought. The violence of the world outside the air-conditioned terminal, the global heatwave and the wars…. That violence! I felt it! It was shaking everything. No one noticed it but me.

— ELIJAH

Dear Elijah,
So much of the war on people and on all of life, can be traced to the people who live like consumerized Americans. But the capitalists teach us that buying that next product is a completely discrete act, without cause or consequence. The fossil fuel industry and weapons industry count on that ignorance.

Eiijah, consumerism was always surreal. Our domestic life is bathed in the exaggerations of saturation advertising. But lately the billionaires are testing our default reality. Their money-making destruction of life is spiraling into full-scale constant terror.

Jamie Dimon, CEO of JPMorgan-Chase, investor in the IDF and killer of the Paris Climate Agreement, makes $100,000 a day. His bank's investments in fossil fuels that produce methane and CO2 emissions is number one year in and year out. He acts with impunity, and we're constantly told we should admire people like this. The only answer is to do good, be good and start secret alliances with sleeper cells of good people who are willing to disrupt the everyday assumptions that anchor the violence. As for Jamie Dimon, our solution is to sing radical songs in his banks, and sneak damning info through the hole in the teller window.

REV

REVEREND BILLY TALEN IS THE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING. HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE REVEREND? EMAIL REVBILLY@REVBILLY.COM AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL.

ADD UP YOUR SAVINGS

ERIC THOR'S WEB APP SHOWS YOU HOW MUCH MONEY YOU WILL SAVE WITH A MAYOR MAMDANI

CHAE KIHN

By Elsie Carson-Holt

"I remember having conversations with folks on election day where there was an 18 year old and there was a 77 year old, and everybody was talking about affordability," says Eric Thor, former DSA chair and coder.

Thor, who lives in Astoria, had campaigned for Mamdani before, when he was running as state assembly member, and had built his website then. On his free-time, Thor decided to create a way for New Yorkers to quickly see how much money they would save under a Mamdani administration. Thus was born the Zohran Save Calculator.

"I'm somebody who really loves Zoran, a really big supporter, and I know he's got a really great political vision…I thought, as an individual, what are the ways that I can kind of help support him?" Thor said he asked himself. "I also saw my technological skills as a way to kind of spread the message of, like, 'Hey, if you are a rent stabilized tenant, if you are going to have a kid soon, or you have a kid right now, you're looking for, you know, universal child care. Or if you're somebody who takes the bus a lot, you're saving money here.'"

The web-based app does just this: all you do is indicate if you are a rent stabilized tenant and then your rent, how many times a week you ride the bus, and how many children under five years old you have, users can see how much tangible change a Mamdani administration would make in their life.

The Zohran Save calculator has made a splash on social media—with over 350,000 views on Twitter, along with almost 10,000 views on Instagram, and 1,350 views on TikTok. Thor thinks their simplicity and user-friendliness had something to do with that. "The sense is, when you're making tools for working people, you want to make sure that they're really easy, straightforward, accessible and simple, something that has a clear message that doesn't take up too much of people's time, and doesn't have complicated forms or jargons," Thor said. "I tried to really make it simple, something you could pull up on your phone, do quickly…and have a number at the end of it, and also be able to share that number with other folks."

Diana Moreno, who also lives in Astoria and works for a labor union, was one of the users of the app, who saw it on Thor's Twitter account. The app told her she would save $16,000 dollars a year on childcare, which she says is actually an underestimate.

Moreno pays $2,700 a month for daycare for her 6-month old, over double what Zohran Save calculated to be the average monthly cost of childcare for children under five years old.

"Eric…created this really easy calculator that essentially helped me see just how much universal child care would help me save as a working parent. And you know, his calculation, is pretty low, I would say, estimate of how much childcare costs per month," Moreno shared when asked about the experience of using the Zohran Save Calculator. "Even though right now, I'm paying over $32,000 a year on childcare. Based on the current cost, I think that the Eric's calculator is a conservative estimate of savings, and it still shows a huge savings for working parents like myself."

Her family would start thinking about saving up money to buy a co-op if they had that extra income that universal childcare would offer them, Moreno said, something that is completely out of the realm of possibility for her and her partner currently. She would also consider working less, to be able to spend time with her child during the critical development stages he is in.

"Universal childcare is truly the bare minimum that a civilized society can offer working parents, and it really is not a pie in the sky policy. It's the floor for building a society in which children are and families are able to survive," Moreno said. Were it to be implemented, "it would change our lives dramatically."

TECH FOR THE PEOPLE: *Eric Thor created the Zohran Save Calculator.*

The Mamdani campaign was not involved whatsoever in the development of the Zohran Save Calculator, Thor said. It falls in the category of "independent expenditure," and took him about a day to make. However, Thor said that it does hold possibilities for canvassing. "Canvassers told me this would be great if we had this at the doors!'" he shared. Thor said that people from across the country reached out to him about adapting the app to use for their own campaigns, an idea he is fully in support of.

"I want to make it a really simple tool for campaigns to take on," Thor said. He also noted it would be useful to use as a URL in text-blasts, or as a tool on campaigns websites.

In any iteration, the Zohran Save Calculator is an innovative way of showing voters how they could be positively materially impacted by progressive policies.

"In any election, there's clear interest for billionaires, for tax write-offs or tax breaks or some sort of corporate or company kind of interest. Then there's also interest directly for working class people, which also comes down to dollars," Thor said. "And we shouldn't shy away from those like immediate impacts as well, where saving $1,000, saving $3,000 is something that's really significant and a really big boost to somebody's bottom line."

IN THE HEART OF THE 'COMMIE CORRIDOR'

MEET THE CITY'S MOST PRO-ZOHRAN NEIGHBORHOOD

ELSIE CARSON-HOLT

READY FOR CHANGE: *A pair of Zohran Mamdani supporters take a break at Bushwick's Maria Hernandez Park.*

By Elsie Carson-Holt

Young people carried Zohran Mamdani in his victory in the Democratic mayoral primary, stunning establishment Democrats and reshaping the electorate. Nowhere was this more clear than the so-called "Commie Corridor," where young people had extremely high voter turnout and overwhelmingly supported Mamdani.

The "Commie Corridor" is a swath of North Brooklyn and Western Queens that New York City organizer and researcher Michael Lange describes as "the young and hungry leftist base reshaping politics in New York City." He noted that young people who are "overwhelmingly renters with left-leaning politics," make up the Commie Corridor.

The corridor is commonly understood to stretch along the East River from Astoria to Sunset Park. However, as young, college-educated people are moving deeper into Brooklyn and Queens into neighborhoods like Kensington, Bushwick, Ridgewood, Clinton Hill, Prospect Heights, Bed-Stuy, and South Slope, the corridor is expanding.

Leftist politicians besides Mamdani that have been elected in the Commie Corridor include State Senators Julia Salazar (Bushwick and Ridgewood), Jabari Brisport (Clinton Hill, Bed-Stuy, and Fort Greene) and Kristen Gonzalez (Astoria to Williamsburg),

Assemblymember Emily Gallagher (Greenpoint) and City Councilmembers Alexa Avilés (Red Hook and Sunset Park), Sandy Nurse (Bushwick) and Tiffany Cabán (Astoria).

When asked what caused the Commie Corridor, Lange explained "young people have been very politicized in the Obama, Trump, Sanders era, and the housing crisis is basically just pushing them farther and farther out. And so the Commie Corridor has definitely expanded."

Lange traced the beginnings of the Commie Corridor in Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Bushwick, parts of Astoria and Long Island City to Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential run. Cynthia Nixon's run for governor in 2018 and Maya Wiley's 2021 mayoral campaign expanded and strengthened the Commie Corridor.

"And then Zohran was someone who, very uniquely, was able to bring a lot of voters out," Lange said. "He had a very compelling affordability-focused message, which is the dominant issue for young people in the city. Rents go up every year. The cost of living is really bad. Young people don't have much protection from that, because they're rarely homeowners."

Nowhere is this more true than in Bushwick's voting precinct 53/025, where Mamdani defeated Andrew Cuomo with 96% of the vote (489 to 21) after ranked choice votes were tabulated. This sweep probably makes it among the most pro-Zohran blocks in the city. In neighboring precincts in Bushwick and nearby Ridgewood, the pro-Zohran pattern held up, where he led from 60 to over 80 points.

The Indy went to Bushwick's Maria Hernandez Park on a sweltering July day to ask people who live in the area why they voted for Mamdani and why they thought their neighborhood swung so hard for him.

Clara, a food server, and Jamie, an audio engineer, have lived in Bushwick for three and five years respectively. When asked why they voted for Mamdani, Jamie said that "Considering I don't vote often, I only vote if somebody's on the ballot that I really align with, and Zohran aligned with 98% of the issues that I cared about. It was like, 'yeah, I should vote for this guy. And I hate Andrew Cuomo a lot. So it was, like, even more so a reason,'" Jamie said.

Clara agreed that her dislike for Andrew Cuomo ignited her enthusiasm for Mamdani, but felt like that was "selling his platform short. I think it was refreshing to see someone who was actually sort of aligned with a lot of my viewpoints and a lot of the viewpoints of people that I'm friends with here, and not just Bushwick, Brooklyn or New York in general."

Both said they see Mamdani as bucking a trend within the Democratic Party, of the "very status quo, centrist-left politicians that don't really align with the working class," Clara said.

"He was promoting making things more affordable, which is something that I feel every day, things are getting more expensive seemingly every week," Jamie said. "Basically it's a bottom line and that's probably why there was a 90% swing, because he was the only one talking about a practical issue that could be addressed."

Sitting on a bench nearby were Fay, a writer and lifelong New Yorker who lives on the Lower East Side, and Josh, a chef who lives in nearby Ridgewood. They were also Zohran voters. Fay said she voted for Mamdani because she has seen "a lot of politicians really fuck up the city, specifically Eric Adams."

"Most of my friends who are native New Yorkers have had to move to New Jersey or far out in neighborhoods that they weren't raised in because they can no longer afford it. So having a politician who's young and cool and really seems to put his money where his mouth is really exciting for me," she shared.

"He [Mamdani] was a candidate that I resonated with in that he was young and was speaking to a lot of the values that felt true and that felt real," Josh agreed. "Whereas, as opposed to the current mayor, I just didn't feel like his policies aligned with my values, and he just wasn't a person that I felt like I was able to resonate with."

Josh said he saw a big push for Mamdani in his neighborhood, in talking to his roommates, his close circle of friends, and people at the restaurant he works at. Josh contrasted these conversations with ones he had with his father and some of his friends, who he described as "more conservative."

"I feel like every reason that he [Josh's father] gave me to not vote for Zohran had no sort of real implication. It was something related to Israel or, 'Oh, he's a terrorist, he's totally irrational.'" Josh said. "So I think every reason that I was getting from the conversations that my more conservative friends were giving me not to vote for Zohran, really paled in comparison to the people that I talked to that did vote for him."

It's largely voters like the ones in Maria Hernandez Park that gave Mamdani his decisive win.

"I think his margin of victory came from the Commie Corridor," Lange said. "If you removed it from New York City, he probably would have lost, but he wouldn't have lost by that much," Lange said when asked what portion of Mamdani's votes came from the Commie Corridor.

FRANCES F. DENNEY

WHY I JOINED THE DSA

FROM ALBANY INSIDER TO CARD-CARRYING SOCIALIST, FORMER CUOMO AIDE, WHISTLEBLOWER REFLECTS ON HER POLITICAL JOURNEY

By Lindsey Boylan

In the middle of a torrential downpour and unrelenting heat in New York, I made my way to a storied Gothic revival church serving Brooklyn Heights for almost a hundred years. What I found inside that night surprised me: rows and rows of pews filled with young New Yorkers. I had to settle for a seat behind a large column in the back. If the church felt timeless, the gathering was decidedly of the moment. It was almost as if the 45-and-under demographic that transformed the Democratic primary election vote was transported symbolically to this historic church on this particular night. Their optimism and passion for making our city work for everyone was palpable. Such was the energy bringing people to a mid-summer New York City DSA convening.

The last few months have been a wild ride for New Yorkers. Disgraced former governor Andrew Cuomo, armed with close to $30 million in Super PAC money, millions of dollars of free press from corporate media, and the political establishment in his back pocket, tried to force himself on New York City residents in the Democratic mayoral primary. He was rebuffed handily by Zohran Mamdani, the 33-year-old democratic socialist assembly member who won by 12 points. New York power brokers are having a meltdown over the reality that our city will finally have a mayor they cannot control. For myself, as the first woman who came forward with harassment allegations that ultimately led to Cuomo's resignation, this has been an incredibly therapeutic and necessary shift in our city's politics.

Mamdani, his campaign, and the broad coalition of support will be written about for years to come. Among the most important forces behind this historic upset is the New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America.

The July 14th "Mayor's Race Debrief" was the first big DSA event I attended. I was welcomed by name and with genuine warmth, something often rare in political spaces. The excitement in the church was palpable – most folks had canvassed and donated to Zohran's campaign since their organization helped him launch in October 2024. Hundreds listened attentively as the electoral working group leads presented on the efforts they had undertaken during the primary and what we would need to do to help win decisively in the November general election and garner a strong mandate to lead. There were numerous visual presentations explaining how high voter turnout was directly connected to canvassing efforts. I was struck by how strategic it was, how crisp and thoughtful each working group lead was in their presentation, as well as the openness and accessibility of the Q&A that followed.

This could not have been in greater contrast to the entirety of my years working for Andrew Cuomo ultimately as Deputy Secretary for Economic Development and Housing or being stuck in his toxic orbit. If you wanted a career under his reign, genuine conversation was not welcomed nor advised. So scripted was every public meeting or event that there would be no question asked that would make him or his most senior cronies uncomfortable. Much of the press was in on or at least aware of the game — they were only called on if they could be counted on to ask certain types of questions and avoid others. For Cuomo, power was and is always about control. Everything flowed from that demand and everyone, even lieutenant governors, cabinet members and legislative leaders fell in line.

NOW: *Lindsey Boylan has found a new political home.*

THEN: *Former Andrew Cuomo aide Lindsey Boylan stands behind her boss at a 2018 press conference.*

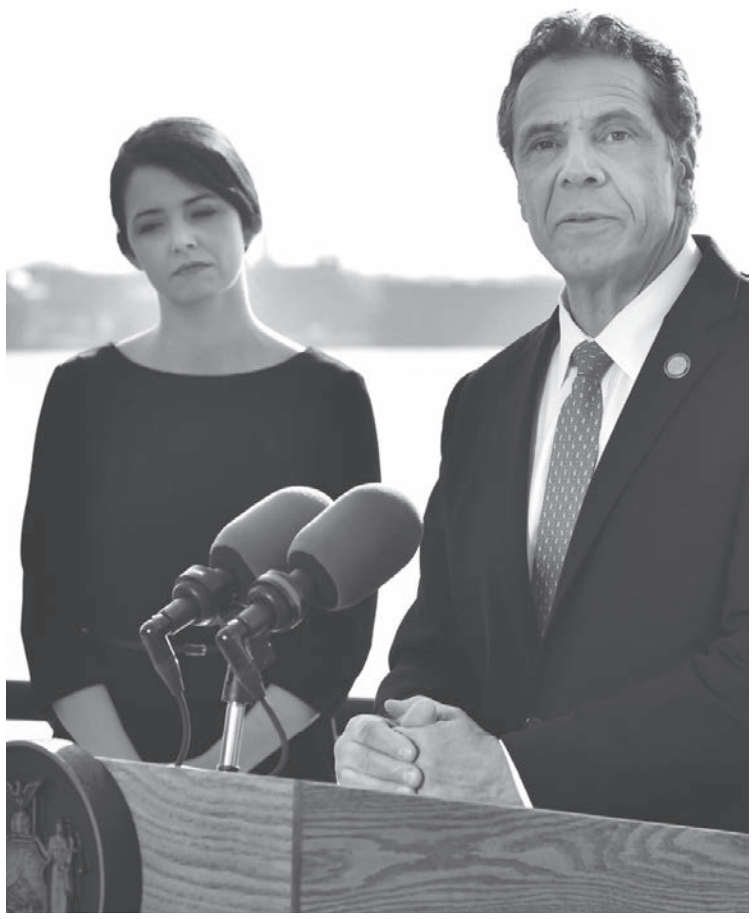
DISCOVERING THE UNEXPECTED

Imagine my surprise, finding out that DSA is a place where every voice is truly valued and the goal is actually to deal with extreme inequality — the very issue that dominates our era. One of the many collaborative actions I worked on during the primary campaign was a press conference for the June 14 "No Kings Day" march in New York City where we made the connection between Trump and Cuomo. They're basically the same person: abusers who seek office only to further empower themselves at the expense of everyone else. The trick was not only to get the other mayoral candidates there to speak out against Cuomo (Shout out to the Working Families Party on this!), but also have a large contingent of anti-Cuomo folks join the broader march after.

It was DSA members who showed up early to help set up the press conference. It was DSA members who helped lead our contingent into the rally and who printed stickers and posters to highlight our anti-abuser message at the event. Each small detail was considered and planned with the aid of DSA members – I and others were never left alone to do the hard work in isolation.

Not only is everything about DSA so unlike my experience working for Cuomo, it is so disparate from my experience of being abandoned by my own party, the Democratic Party of New York. After I came forward and the governor resigned, many elected Democrats called me and the other women brave. However, many of these party leaders remained silent when Cuomo decided to run again, despite their earlier halfhearted calls for his resignation. My party quite literally let me fight this monster and his attacks alone, rather than use their privilege to

Continued on page 12



COURTESY/NYS GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

NYC'S GR

A MAMDANI MAYORALTY OPENS A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

By Nancy Romer & Ashley Dawson

Like other progressive social movements in New York City, the climate movement is abuzz with the possibilities of a Zohran Mamdani mayoralty. Mamdani could demonstrate what a progressive city government can accomplish in protecting the health and well-being of their people and the planet. Strong climate policies could lower energy bills, improve New Yorkers' health and quality of life, and significantly reduce carbon emissions. Equally important, a people-led transition could give people hope that we can build a future worth living in.

Broadly speaking, climate activists want an ambitious plan to protect our vulnerable coastal city, decrease energy costs, protect public health and create a just transition to a renewable energy grid through a dramatic expansion of good jobs—which should mean union jobs. The state Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act of 2019 mandates that New York have 70% renewable energy in 2030 and 100% zero-emission electricity by 2040—although a state draft energy plan released in July projected that it wouldn't meet the 70% goal until 2033.

WHAT'S MAMDANI'S HISTORY AS AN ENVIRONMENTALIST?

Mamdani knows the stakes and some of the solutions to the climate crisis in New York. One of his earliest organizing projects was the fight against a proposed dirty energy plant in Astoria, his neighborhood. During his two terms in the state Assembly, he supported the All-Electric Buildings Act and congestion pricing, won more than $100 million in additional operating funds for our subways and buses, and created the city's first successful fare-free bus pilot program.

He was an initial cosponsor of the state Build Public Renewables Act, which requires the publicly owned New York Power Authority (NYPA) to develop renewable energy for the public sector and beyond, filling in the massive gaps left by the private sector. He championed the push to expand NYPA to develop 15 gigawatts of renewable energy, with half of that going to projects in the city. As NYPA produces, distributes, and pays for energy for all public-sector buildings in the state, its expansion is key to renewable energy solutions. Mamdani will have to garner support from Gov. Kathy Hochul, who has been reluctant to implement this plan. But facing an election next year, she might be convinced to change her tune, especially with a movement push. That model of publicly owned energy could be used to develop a municipal energy entity as well.

WHAT'S MAMDANI'S PLAN?

Green Healthy Schools: Mamdani's website calls for a Healthy Green Schools transformation, seeing public schools as sites for building renewable energy, establishing geothermal networks, and cleaning up unhealthy heat, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems. With these aims, he plans to renovate the infrastructure of 500 public schools, transform 500 asphalt schoolyards into vibrant green spaces, and create emergency resilience hubs in 50 schools. This would create 15,000 union jobs, and could be expanded by including the City University of New York's 25 campuses, which have more than 300 large buildings.

Affordability & Safety: Mamdani pledges to oppose any rate increases for private energy corporations like Con Ed and National Grid, oppose any new fossil-fuel infrastructure in the city, and shut down "peaker plants." These provide extra power during peak-consumption times, but are highly polluting and are mostly located in low-income communities.

Decreasing Carbon Emissions in Privately Owned Buildings-Enforcing Local Law 97: Passing Local Law 97 in 2019 was a great victory for the climate movement. It promised to eliminate carbon emissions from buildings larger than 25,000 square feet. But its implementation has been very slow, mostly due to resistance from the Real Estate Board of New York and a lack of enforcement by Mayor Eric Adams. Mamdani acknowledges the need to help middle-income co-ops decarbonize, but also plans on being tougher on big landlords—who could save on energy bills by decarbonizing, but resist because they might sell their buildings before they see a return on that investment.

Resilience & Protection: Mamdani has plans for resilient housing and expanded electrification of buildings. While his plans for public waterfronts and flood protections are not fully spelled out, these sites could be redesigned to protect coastal communities while also providing public green space and recreational opportunities. He also plans to build more cooling centers with greater capacity, as summer heat waves are the greatest cause of climate-related deaths. He will oppose any new gas or other fossil fuel pipelines or automatic gas hook-ups, and will enforce the city's Gas Free NYC legislation.

Transportation: Mamdani plans to make all buses free. Bus transportation, however, is notoriously slow, which encourages car usage. Free buses, as well as an increase in fast priority routes within the outer boroughs, will decrease car usage and carbon emissions. Mamdani also supports having the Metropolitan Transportation Authority spending money to

EEN NEW DEAL

make subways more efficient and safer, and increasing congestion-pricing tolls to increase revenue for the subways and buses and to reduce car traffic and carbon emissions in Manhattan. As an avid bicyclist, he is also likely to respond to calls to make bike lanes and travel safer.

WHAT ELSE IS POSSIBLE AND NEEDED?

Distributed Energy Resource projects could be a transformative approach to decarbonizing many of the city's public buildings. These would produce energy on rooftops, public lands, golf courses, schools, universities, hospitals, and prisons, instead of generating power in one location with long distribution lines. In New York City, unlike most of the U.S., 70% of the carbon emissions come from buildings, instead of from transportation. According to a feasibility study prepared for Public Power NY, the city has the potential to create 10 gigawatts of solar power from rooftops. That would generate 25% of annual electric consumption and 53% of daylight consumption of energy on public buildings. That would create thousands of good union jobs and accelerate the phaseout of peaker plants.

NYPA could lead the way, in both developing renewable energy and in paying for it. Many CUNY campuses have sufficient space to generate and store their own energy, and some of the surplus energy generated could be shared with neighboring communities. Community owned and public rooftop solar could be part of this mix.

New York City Housing Authority public housing could similarly produce its own energy: NYCHA has 392 acres of rooftop space that might be used for solar development. The city Department of Education owns 800 acres of land across 1,100 schools and could also produce solar energy built by NYPA. Other public lands, such as MTA-owned sites; jails (particularly Rikers Island); and brownfields, where other building projects are unlikely, could also be used to produce publicly owned renewable energy. This could lead to a publicly owned municipal power authority.

Making that happen would require state funding, but with the political will—a mass campaign pushed by our new mayor and City Council, and support from our state legislators, it is completely feasible.

Mamdani could advance the "Retrofit Accelerator," a city program that gives landlords advice and funding to retrofit their buildings to improve energy efficiency, to be more effective in helping economically modest owners. He could also upgrade the electrical grid, particularly in the outer boroughs, to prevent blackouts and brownouts in low-wealth neighborhoods.

HOW CAN MAMDANI PAY FOR THIS?

While Gov. Hochul has firmly stated, "no new taxes," that might change with pressure, especially because federal subsidies are being slashed. The city will need more money to reach any significant climate goals. But Mamdani, allied with climate advocates, could push the state to dramatically expand NYPA bonds, as well as restoring the state's stock-transfer tax. Mamdani's website indicates that he will seek to raise the corporate tax rate to 11.5% (matching New Jersey's), which would raise $5 billion, and to add an additional 2% income tax on New Yorkers with earnings above $1 million annually. He cites a number of reforms that would cut red tape, end no-bid contracts, and increase collections of fines from unscrupulous landlords.

WHAT'S THE VEHICLE TO CREATE THE BEST PLAN?

A Mamdani-led New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) could lead the way to a coordinated and effective approach to climate protection and funding. NYCEDC is a public benefit corporation charged with overseeing economic development in the city, able to give companies access to tax-exempt bond financing and tax benefits. It has a declared commitment to building sustainable infrastructure for the city, but it needs to move from being an agent of gentrification to one that promotes resilience and supports climate justice.

For example, the Brooklyn Marine Terminal plan the NYC EDC is pushing in Red Hook embodies much of what is wrong with the current model of economic development: more high-priced housing and no flood protection for current residents, with minimal plans to reduce truck traffic by promoting low-emissions waterborne transportation to move goods from the port. A Mamdani administration could change this.

Mamdani's energy-transition strategy would not have to be limited to the five boroughs. As Mayor, he would fight the Trump administration's efforts to shut down offshore wind projects, such as those off Long Island. Those projects are essential, as they would reduce the need for expanded and upgraded long-distance transmission infrastructure, which would in turn result in huge savings for ratepayers in the city and state.

Last, the city could take a leading role in assembling a Northeast-wide energy-transition program, one that could link the region's progressive states with Canada, a clean-energy superpower to the north.

SUPPORT FROM THE CLIMATE AND ADJACENT MOVEMENTS

Mamdani has a great deal of support from the climate movement and beyond. His public power approach is soundly supported by a number of unions—the Professional Staff Congress-CUNY, the United Federation of Teachers, United University Professions-SUNY, and many of the building-trades unions. His Green Schools platform was basically written by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and is supported by most of the city's unions, and the state AFL-CIO has supported all or parts of Mamdani's proposed policies that have a state focus. Progressive environmental organizations in the city have many common demands, although there are significant differences in their emphases, strategies, and neighborhood and cultural backgrounds. Climate Jobs NY and the various unions engaged in climate work will be pushing for those 15,000 jobs to be union jobs and for the apprentice programs that will be organized as part of that push. The New York City Central Labor Council's endorsement of Mamdani portends well for that. Keeping those relationships strong, and building new connections and solidarity, will require negotiations, listening and making alterations, and likely compromises, as needed.

Many of these plans and policies will require City Council approval. The Council's progressive wing will need to wield a great deal of power in getting Mamdani's program through the shoals of political haggling.

Donald Trump is the perennial wild card. The federal government has allowed financial support for all climate projects where construction will have actually started—"shovels in the ground"—by July 2026. That means fast-tracking projects to avoid losing that funding. Fast-tracking often provokes resistance, as communities want to have their say, and bureaucracies are used to moving at a very slow pace. Mamdani will have to move that timeline quickly. And Trump might cut off funding anyway, if he decides to punish the city for choosing a mayor who can set a new and winning path for the Democrats—something Trump is more afraid of than anything else.

Building a strong base now, during the electoral campaign, will be key to going into his mayoralty with strength and purpose. His army of door-to-door canvassers and phone callers will need to deepen their reach and continue their work well past Nov. 4. The forces are here to support an effective climate leader in Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

Nancy Romer is the Co-Chair of the Environmental Justice Working Group at the Professional Staff Congress, the union that represents 30,000 faculty and staff at CUNY. Ashley Dawson is the author of Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change.

AS THE WIND BLOWS

Wind and solar energy are now "the most cost-effective forms of new-build energy generation" even without tax incentives, the Lazard Inc. investment bank said in its annual analysis, released in June.

The report is based on what Lazard calls the "levelized cost of energy" (LCOE), the value of the energy produced by a project over its lifetime divided by its cost. For utility-scale solar power, the LCOE was $38 to $78 per megawatt-hour (MWh), and it was $37 to $86 for onshore wind. In contrast, a new natural-gas power plant would cost $48 to $109 per MWh, the highest in the past 10 years–although already existing gas plants had an LCOE of $24 to $39.

"In the current high-power demand environment," Lazard said, "renewables stand out as both the lowest-cost and quickest-to-deploy generation resource."

Renewable energy now accounts for more than 20% of the U.S. electricity system. But the Trump budget's elimination of tax incentives is likely to discourage investment, the Energy Innovations think tank said in July. It projected that electricity bills in states that don't support developing renewables would rise by 30% to 60% over the next 10 years.

– INDYPENDENT STAFF

STREET SOCIALISM

HOW THE NEW YORK LEFT IS LEADING THE NATION

By Nicholas Powers

What could New York be? More important, who could we be? Every day is like a drum beat; the Republicans attack, they do ICE raids, they rob the poor to give to the rich, they arrest protesters. New Yorkers are forced to choose. Either turn on each other like snitches, or unite and fight.

New York said, "Go. Guck Yourself." Trump sends ICE to rip families apart; we flood the courts. The 1% raise our rents, transit and food costs; we elect a Democratic Socialist mayor. We are told, "Be silent" during Israel's genocide of Gaza. Instead, we shake signs and chant like thunder and march like a massive river.

I love New York. We are the most visible wave of resistance that is rising across the country. On the subway, I see riders play videos of people in Los Angeles and Colorado, shoving ICE out of their neighborhood. On the stoop, I hear neighbors defy Trump and say, no, damn it, we are entitled to jobs, housing and health. Call it Resistance 2.0. Call it the Global Intifada. Call it Democratic Socialism.

We feel it lift us like a wave at the beach. The anger at humanity trampled by the state makes our hearts bob like boats in a tsunami. We are only beginning but we already have scored goals; Zohran Mamdani's victory, No Kings Day protests, popular resistance. The wave builds from the street up. It combines working-class New York and the Left into a new hybrid – Street Socialism.

Street Socialism is the new politics emerging from our fight against End Times Fascism. It is a transformation of socialism by the people into a reflection of the people. Yes, it is a multiracial rainbow that stays in the sky. It is young and imagines a future beyond capitalism. It is elderly and kisses a newborn with hope. It is Mass Line politics in which activists listen to people, learn what they need, and draw a blueprint for action. It is savvy enough to do high-tech organizing but loves knocking on doors. It's Street enough to call out identity hustling because anything can be pimped, even one's pain.

Street Socialism has three enemies. The first is the subcultural Left that prizes abstract ideas more than people. The next, centrist Democrats, who make hypocrisy into an art form. They side with the Right against the Left in order to keep their class privilege. Finally, the Right controls large swaths of the state and uses violence to crush the Left. The only force that can overthrow this unholy Trinity is Mass Line politics, one so powerful that a coalition can call for a general strike the size of the George Floyd protests, millions upon millions, but without a pandemic, just a vision. Now that is power.

HOW TO BE A STREET SOCIALIST 101

Read the signs. Look at the streetlights and mail boxes and walls. Look at cafes and bars and graffiti. The signs left by Occupy, Me Too, Black Lives Matters are faded, torn and peeling. It's like when a flood leaves watermarks on rock. I walk down the block and here are new ones that say Free Palestine and Vote Zohran "For a City You Can Afford!" We are in the next wave.

Two great forces gather over New York; fear and hope. Trump looms over us. We feel his shadow in our mouths. We are afraid for our neighbors. We are afraid for ourselves. Against fear is our wild hope to feel reality's simple truth; we need each other. In small ways and big. New York is eight million strangers who in a flash become family during a blackout or a terrorist attack or when you're gonna miss the train and they hold the door. Or sometimes, just a really, really good block party.

Which is why the "Zohran for Mayor" posters, so bright and colorful, the candidate looking all beefcake good, the posters are like Valentine's Day cards. They promise a "New" New York. As we get closer to the November general election, more and more New Yorkers are going to check out Zohran's campaign, and in a spillover, the Democratic Socialists of America. Which gives me hope. Which also makes me worried,

I've shared this fear with friends. After Zohran's win, I called a long-time buddy who has been around the Left for decades, "What do you think will happen?' I pinched the phone between my cheek and shoulder. His voice has a reassuring music to it.

"We have a chance to build a real movement," he said. "Zohran can motivate people to go beyond voting." He paused. I could hear the gears turning. "I finally get Bernie's political revolution. He meant the ongoing mobilization of all of us against the elites who prop up a failed status quo."

"Yeah," I sighed and memories of my early activism flashed. "The Left is the Left. There's a lot of personality cults and sectarian I'm-more-revolutionary-than-thou bullshit." We sighed like twins. In my head I played a movie montage of life right after 9/11. The Ajax smell of the Twin Towers hung in the air. The Iraq War was going to start. I went to a communist bookstore for answers. To their credit, the staff showed me books that were like hospital x-rays. I saw bone-hard facts under skin-level propaganda. I saw the disease of U.S. imperialism, a cancer on the planet. I was grateful but unnerved at how all problems, all questions were already answered by their leader's "new synthesis." It felt a little culty. I left and would see them at big anti war protests. I waved at them, smiling, but smiling from a distance.

The Left has deadends. On the phone, my friend's voice became background. I remembered a reporter presenting on his road trip across America during Occupy Wall Street. He sat at the sites, seeing bright-faced newcomers, ready to take-it-to-the-man, get bogged down in debates over words and identity. One by one, like candles being snuffed, the Occupy sites dwindled before the police came and stomped them out under their boots.

CHAE KIHN

CHAE KIHN

SUE BRISK

"I'll just say it," I said. "I'm scared to hope. Mamdani's campaign, the DSA, the thousands of young people out canvassing. Now after Zohran's win, the Left feels alive and growing. I just hope it's not too late."

My friend was silent. I looked at the phone. The call dropped. I had been talking to myself.

I texted: I'm going to the next DSA meeting. I'll bring my son. Join us.

He texted: Yes. I'll see you there!

Just like that, it was there again, the slightly dizzy feeling, being lifted until your toes don't touch ground. Like a wave.

LIBERALS, THE BEST ENEMY MONEY CAN BUY

"*In Return of the Jedi*, the fish-faced general, what's his name," I snapped fingers, "Admiral Ackbar, when the rebels attacked the Death Star and saw enemy ships, he yelled, 'It's a trap!' Let's photoshop Bernie's face on him. On the Empire's star-destroyers, photoshop Obama, Pelosi, Schumer and Eric Adams." I made a magic ta-da gesture. "Liberals are a trap!" I laughed at my joke. The dinner guests did not.

Around the table, guests raised eyebrows or silently picked at food. Live in New York long enough, you'll know people who know people. I was the plus one to a dinner party of a Black media power player. Glasses sparkled like diamonds. The fucking dog had a gold chain leash. The dog!

It was after Zohran's win, and the specter of socialism really scared them. After my joke, person after person began a litany of why he will fail in the election or as mayor. The guests counted off reasons. One, the city doesn't have the money. Two, unions won't back him. Three, Trump will arrest him (that last point said with a snicker). Four, Americans hate socialism. Four and a half, Black people don't trust it. Five. THE CITY HAS NO MONEY!

The more I listened, it felt like each guest took off their faces like a rubber mask and under it was a jerky android. They repeated the attack lines used by the *New York Times* and Democratic Party. When I left, down the street were Section 8 houses, a police car's lights flashed like angry eyes. The shadows of addicts moved on the wall. Seeing the thin line between new money and old poverty, I got it. Since the Civil Rights Movement, decades of integration created a layer of newly minted, middle class people of color. It's Caribbean brownstone owners. It's Puerto Rican coffee shop or supermarket owners. It's Asian laundromats. It's Yemeni bodega owners. It's Black American real estate and media stars. No one wants to have their money fucked with. No. One.

Seen from a seat at that table, democratic socialism, or any type of socialism, was a threat. The blind spot of that way of living was the inner rot of classism. We justified us versus them in ways that disturbingly echoed racists. We code-switched so much we forgot how we really talked. We cut off family who fall between the cracks to save ourselves. Enough of us do it and it kicks up a level. It becomes "common sense" or "street smarts" that fits all too well with a neo-liberal, free-market, Social Darwinism but without the crude monkey cartoons.

Hours later I trotted up the subway steps into Bed-Stuy's summer night. It was a cool blessing. Zohran posters everywhere. Will we win in November? If we do, will liberals sabotage his mayoralty and the movement? They already did with Bernie years ago. They hold high positions in the media and politics. Their ideology gets into your head like a Doja Cat song.

Maybe Street Socialism was different. It offered the one thing the street wants, redemption. Yes, when the masses joined protests, they were sparked by a moral shock, a Trayvon Martin shot, a George Floyd yelling, "I can't breathe!" What sustains it beyond shock is, yes, the chance to stop oppression but also, redeem ourselves. When you're a hustler, you sell what you can steal or you sell bits of yourself. You fight to survive. You keep up a reputation. It's the code of the street. I know, I've touched gunshot wounds in my neighbor's arms and calves. I ducked when a crew shot up our block party. I saw a friend reduced to begging for dimes to buy coffee. I have seen boys snatch gold chains off grown men, left stunned on the sidewalk. I can relive that in just the four blocks between the subway and my building.

Street Socialists know a deep need for redemption drives the people. Yes, we want better things but we also want to be better. After being so low, we hunger for a wave to lift us again, to wash us clean of blood. We want to be sacred and respectable too. We just don't believe it's possible and retreat into vulgar bitterness. But when it feels at your fingertips, all that repressed hope washes over the street like a tsunami.

I thought about the dinner. Maybe that's the most frustrating thing about liberals. They are so afraid of losing privilege they don't see how much we all need to be healed from classism. They see Street Socialism as a threat. It is not a threat. It is holiness.

FIGHT CLUB

What will happen? I am on the stoop, reading *the Indy* when a neighbor comes by. He is tall, a fresh fade that looks perfectly tapered. He has a Zohran pin. So do I. We pretend they are magnets that pull us into a hug.

"I can't let go," I yell.

"Push it," he says.

"This is not a Salt-n-Peppa song!" We giggle. I ask him what he thinks of the city after Zohran's win.

"I think things could change fast," he leans and looks at me and doesn't blink. "That's if they don't shoot him."

The Right loves violence. They brag about it. The showoff arsenals, guns laid out in a bed. Right politicians stoke racism so lone wolves murder liberals and leftists. The Right controls the federal government and are conjuring up a private army,

Continued on next page

STAY COOL: *Children soak themselves in a water fountain on a hot summer day.*

BOLD MOVES: *A three-on-three basketball game at Inwood Park.*

FAMILY TIME: *Cooking up a feast on an East River Park barbeque grill.*

STREET SOCIALISM

Continued from previous page

ICE to legally destroy innocent people, and like a domino effect, legal citizens are not far behind.

My great fear for Zohran's campaign, the DSA and other Left groups is that their belief in the better angels of our nature drives their success. It feels like a vulnerability. What happens when the Right steals an election, dissolves government, jails politicians? If it does not go that far, what if the Right surveils us or plants agent saboteurs in meetings, or exposes vulgar internet search histories by activists, or blacklists professionals? Democrats and Democratic Socialists are devoted to respectability politics. Sure the DSA is militant, but its roots are in the college-educated middle class.

Street Socialism is dirty. No one has time for that shit. Spend life working the angles, beefing with crews, shooting and stealing and working minimum wage and you get very realistic about human nature. Sure, use nonviolence because it's tactical. Sure, use nonviolence because it's ethical. We do not want to become monsters to defeat monsters. If we succeed and New York becomes a workers' city and wins against MAGA, and the 1% try to take it back, best believe the old street instincts would kick in. The people will defend it by any means necessary.

"We have to be real," I said. "If the Liberals can't stop us, the Right will come down on the Left like a hammer. The only chance we have is if everyone comes out." I gestured up and down the block. "Everyone." I looked at him. "Only mass politics can save us from authoritarianism." I began texting him. "Here."

"What's that?" his eyebrows knotted.

"Info for the Democratic Socialists meetup," I said. "Come with me."

TROUGH TO CREST

Knock. Knock. I trot to the door, rubbing wet hands on a towel, "Who's there?"

"I want to tell you about Zohran's campaign," a husky voice said from the other side. I open it and see a white woman in a Hot Girls for Zohran shirt. She has bright eyes, and conviction in the angle of her jaw. She did what women do, scanned me for danger and handed me a door pamphlet.

"Funny shirt," I pointed as my son squeezed in, head like a big curious rabbit.

"Who's Zohran?" he asked.

"The next Jesus," I murmured and put the pamphlet on the doorknob.

"You don't believe in Jesus," he looked up.

"If he freezes my rent, I will," I saw the canvasser going into her pitch. I gestured to stop. "I'd vote for him twice, if I could. You had a long day ahead. Save your voice."

She winked and turned to the next door. Knock. Knock. More canvassers knuckled doors above.

Before the election, I saw Zohran canvassers everywhere, at the Children's Museum, on front stoops, cafes, restaurants. An small army of 50,000 volunteers knocking on over 1.5 million doors throughout the city. My son's godmother was one. She told me over the phone about the thrill of new faces, rediscovering New York, the sweet conversations at the doorway. People told her about their hardships. How they remade lives from loss. It made the campaign's ideas of a rent freeze and free buses and city-run grocery stores connect to reality.

What she told me. What friends told me. They were transformed by the work. Each door opening to new lives, new stories. They heard more than words. They listened to the tired shoulders. They saw red eyes from double back-to-back shifts. They made a note of large families packed into a tiny apartment. They saw hope and fatalism mix like a lava lamp in a child's eyes.

It helped that on social media, Zohran was funny as hell. In one video, he said "rent freeze" and jumped into the icy Atlantic for the polar bear plunge. He's relatable. He eats halal from a food cart. He rides trains and buses like us. He does bad rap videos like us. He met his wife on Hinge like us. He has Street Socialist vibes. When he walked the length of Manhattan, my man got hugged and dapped and cheered.

Remembering the campaign made me smile. I get up, go to the door and snatch the Zohran pamphlet from the knob. Outside on the stoop, I watch a U-Haul truck across the street. A family I knew for years is moving to a cheaper city. I look at Zohran's face on the pamphlet. What do we need to win? Not just the election but the city and the nation. I look up. Until November, we need a full-court press of canvassers and phone banks and rallies. We need people who live and know our blocks to talk and say, "It's time." What's more, we need that full court press, even after the November general election.

We need Street Socialism. The flow of conversation between the activist cadre and the people has to grow and grow until a line is crossed. The people are no longer represented by a party, but use the party to represent themselves. They can challenge the authoritarian state. They can finally wield the power that no one has seen in almost a century – a general strike.

What does that look like? When that level of class struggle is reached it means that me and my friends, family, neighbors – gather on stoops and talk in diamond hard words. Sanitation workers would be on strike. Teachers and MTA workers would be on strike. Private workers would be on strike. Hell, even some police. A mass mobilization of people would gather like a storm cloud. ICE agents and police set up barricades. We are prepared. We weigh protest signs in our hands. We have food and water. We have plans to endure. We strike until the city is ours.

THE OCEAN'S PROMISE

What will happen to New York? What will happen to us? I go to Coney Island and stand on the beach. Maybe the horizon has answers.

Under a blazing sun, New Yorkers play in the ocean. The tides are rhythmic, crashing in, pulling back like a blanket of foam. It's fun to feel your feet sink. It's fun to see a mix of people, the hijab-wearing women holding a child, a Mexican father belly-flops on the water, Asian lovers kiss and hug. It's like the city came for a communal baptism of joy. Laughter. Smiles. Playing.

Maybe we come because we need to be part of something larger, more powerful than us. Maybe it heals us in a deep way to be freed of the self and let the ocean send wave after wave, tossing us like toys.

I wade up to my chest and gaze at the immensity. Where do waves come from? The ones that change history. How powerful can they be? The ocean lifts me up until I can't feel the bottom with my feet. I turn and see New Yorkers, happily riding the waves because they are endless and beautiful and free.

DSA

Continued from page 7

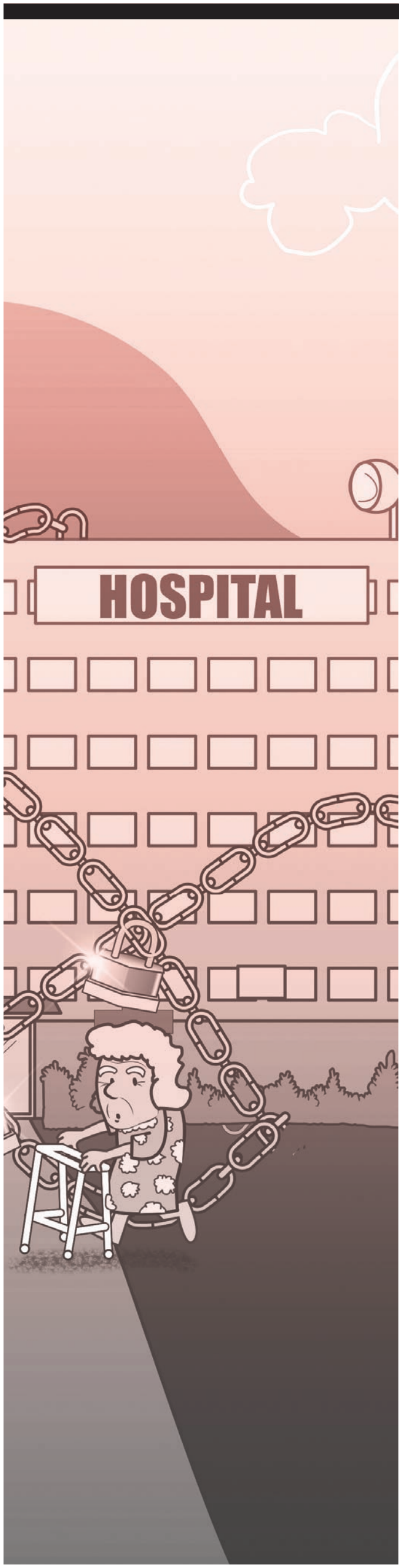
speak up and tell him not to run. If the party establishment is still wondering why their power is waning while DSA's is growing, they don't have to look far.

From the beginning, DSA stood by me and all those Cuomo harmed. On primary election night, one of their data experts took time out of his busy evening with journalists to walk me through the early returns knowing how much this meant to me and my family. Every community canvas I participated in for Zohran was led and filled with DSA members helping to spread the word both for Mamdani and against Cuomo. The organization was a huge force behind the 50,000 volunteers knocking over 1.6 million doors during the primary. Even online, as I continue to be smeared by Cuomo supporters, it is often DSA members who are amongst the first to push back and counter the narrative by creating social media campaigns to help highlight the many abuses of Cuomo and his enablers. Isn't that what the parties are supposed to be about? Shouldn't political parties support the most vulnerable within their ranks and prioritize ethics over power?

We need more of this, not just in New York City but across the country. The DSA community is one built on caring for and learning from each other to make our city work for everybody. When they are not doing political work, they hold cultural and recreational events that allow people to simply enjoy each other's company. Cuomo's world of abuse, toxicity, and fearmongering should not simply stand in opposition to DSA. It should be a thing of the past entirely.

The New York City DSA's membership recently crossed 10,000 while the reach of the organization during the primary was a high multiple of that. They made an indelible impact on our city with Zohran's primary victory. Before that, they supported me and my fight when others cowered before abusers. DSA has made a commitment to fighting for New Yorkers, even when those fights are neither popular nor easy. They are doing the important work to move our city towards true equity and accountability. This is among one of the many reasons why I am proud to be a new DSA member. You should join too by going to socialists.nyc.

Lindsey Boylan is an urban planner who served in the Cuomo administration as deputy secretary for economic development and special advisor to the governor. In February 2021, she became the first of 13 women to accuse Gov. Andrew Cuomo of sexual harassment.



GARY MARTIN

MY VIEW FROM THE BACK OF THE AMBULANCE

AN EMT DESCRIBES HOW TRUMP'S MEDICAID CUTS WILL IMPACT LOW-INCOME NEW YORKERS

By Lane Dibler

The moment we walked into the patient's room, my partner knew the infection was bad. He, a seasoned emergency medical technician, and I, who had worked on the job on and off for about a year, found the patient, a 55-year-old man, lying down in front of us watching a local news TV station.

We had been called by his rehabilitation facility, in the Bronx overlooking Yankee Stadium, with concerns about an infection on his right hand. It was immediately clear why the staff had concerns: His thumb was tightly wrapped with gauze and cravats. The patient swung his legs over the side of the bed to get ready to go—exposing that his left leg had been amputated below the knee. While he struggled to put his shoe on with his one good hand, I offered to help. He declined, gruffly reminding us that he needed to learn how to do it himself.

The patient, born and raised in Brooklyn, refused any help throughout the transport. It was important for him to practice hoisting himself up with his arms onto the stretcher and important for him to make all his seat adjustments. Before we left, he shouted for us to grab the blue Mets ballcap sitting on his dresser. Even the small action of putting the cap on his head with one hand was a struggle.

His ride to the hospital was paid for by Medicaid. In the years to come, millions of ailing or elderly Americans like this patient could find themselves falling through our already frayed social safety net and left to fend for themselves more than they already are.

On July 4, President Donald Trump signed the federal budget legislation he dubbed the "One Big Beautiful Bill" into law. This bill continued the 2017 tax reductions for wealthy Americans, while, the Kaiser Family Foundation estimates, cutting Medicaid funding by $1 trillion over the next decade. Medicaid, established in 1965 along with Medicare for the elderly and disabled, is the primary health insurance for 71 million low-income people—one-fifth of the country's population. That number does not include people who are enrolled in specific Medicaid-covered services.

These cuts will be implemented mainly by tightening eligibility requirements. To receive Medicaid, "able-bodied" individuals will have to verify every month that they did 80 hours of work or volunteering, or prove that they are enrolled in school. This is more likely to trap people in a bureaucratic hellscape than it is to weed out people who are "refusing to work." In 2023, when the state of Georgia implemented similar work-related activity requirements for Medicaid recipients, it led to many people losing insurance—often because the bureaucracy made it too difficult for them to prove that they were complying with the requirements, William Dow, professor of health policy and management at the University of California at Berkeley School of Public Health, said in July. The federal government is off-loading the responsibility of verifying this work requirement to the states, who undoubtedly will have to fill the hole left in healthcare for their residents.

A question that often comes to my mind is how the Trump administration will define "able-bodied." As an EMT and medical transport, I encounter a wide range of patients and people on Medicaid that require care. Every disability, every sickness, and every injury is distinctive. One day my partner and I will care for a woman experiencing abdominal pain. She has a chronic disease that leaves her hooked up to oxygen and connected with a urinary catheter, and receives 24/7 care from multiple female family members in a cramped ground-floor apartment. Then our next call will be for a 17-year-old psych patient who is asking about what will happen to his insurance when he turns 18 the following week.

The Trump administration says its cuts to Medicaid are part of its larger campaign to rid the federal government of "waste, fraud, and abuse." But according to Benjamin Sommers, Huntley Quelch professor of healthcare economics at Harvard University's School of Public Health, "The federal government can't start to achieve meaningful savings unless it removes people from the program, cuts benefits, or lowers reimbursement rates to healthcare providers, which are already low."

A study the university did after Arkansas introduced work requirements in 2018 for Medicaid recipients ages 30 to 49 found that more than 95% of the people the policy targeted were already in compliance—working, studying, caring for family, or living with a qualified disability that kept them out of the workforce, Prof. Sommers said. Despite that fact, the study found a significant increase in people dropping out of Medicaid after the work requirements took effect.

The Trump budget will most likely cut costs by slashing enrollment by 7.8 million people, according to the recent analysis by the Congressional Budget Office. That cost will be felt by all participants in the American healthcare system, as health facilities brace for the influx of uninsured patients, which implies more unpaid medical bills, which leads to the facility raising the price of care for everyone else.

The back of an ambulance is often an emotional place for people. Our Bronx patient told us stories of an active life and a son who lives far away. I asked how he lost his leg, and he just replied solemnly, "sepsis." Sepsis is a life-threatening disorder caused by an infection being left untreated for too long, an inappropriate response from the body's immune defenses that causes them to turn on the body. That can lead to organ failure.

His medical history showed that when he finally saw doctors about his leg, they could already tell that it was too far gone and endangering the rest of his organs.

UNIVERSITIES BELIEVE IN NO

By Hamilton Nolan

On July 30, Brown University signed an agreement with the Trump administration. In exchange for having its government funding restored and (it hopes) having the government stop incessantly hounding it, the school agrees to pay $50 million, to acquiesce to right wing obsessions over bathrooms and trans people, to absolutely end giving racial or income preferences in admissions, and to take a number of performative actions regarding "antisemitism"—which is to say, to position the school as pro-Israel and to agree to serve as a persecutor of anti-Israel sentiment on campus going forward.

There are few obvious things that stand out about this agreement (which will differ only in details with similar agreements already signed by Columbia, and soon to be signed by many other elite colleges). The first and most hilarious thing is that as soon as the agreement has completed its anti-DEI pontificating about Brown's "compliance with anti-discrimination laws," it immediately launches into a lengthy section about all of the special things that Brown must do for Jewish students specifically. Which sound a lot like… DEI? I mean:

Brown is committed to taking significant, proactive, effective steps to combat antisemitism and ensure a campus environment free from harassment and discrimination. These shall include actions to support a thriving Jewish community, research and education about Israel, and a robust Program in Judaic Studies, through outreach to Jewish Day School students to provide information about applying to Brown, resources for religiously observant Jewish community members, renewed partnerships with Israeli academics and national Jewish organizations, support for enhanced security at the Brown-RISD Hillel, and a convening of alumni, students, and faculty to celebrate 130 years of Jewish life at Brown in the 2025-2026 academic year.

Isn't this exactly the kind of stuff that Fox News personalities were mocking five seconds ago, when it was being done for non-white people? As always, "DEI" is fine if it is cementing power for right-wing allies, and otherwise, not. All discussions of "DEI" as a policy are insincere and should be treated as such.

The second thing to note is that the money aspects of these agreements—$50 million for "state workforce development organizations" from Brown, $200 million from Columbia, and perhaps as much as $500 million from Harvard—are just performative ways for the government to have the schools eat shit. Just punishment and forced groveling. An economic form of getting on their knees to kiss Donald Trump's feet. That's all.

The third thing to note is Brown's willingness to explicitly sell out trans people, in response to demands from bigots. In addition to saying it will strictly define "male" and "female" according to the right's preferences, there is this: "The University will not perform gender reassignment surgery or prescribe puberty blockers or hormones to any minor child for the purpose of aligning the child's appearance with an identity that differs from his or her sex." This has nothing to do with education, at all. It is just an item from a bigot's grievance list. Brown is expecting to get hundreds of millions of dollars of funding restored after striking this agreement, but I imagine that the school would have agreed to sell out an unpopular minority for an even lower price, if asked.

The fourth thing to note about this and all of the other agreements is that, even in terms of pure transactional negotiation, they are bad deals. Why? Because the schools cannot enforce them. The underlying purpose of these deals is to get funding back, and, more broadly, to get the government to leave the schools alone. But will it? No. The Trump administration will do what it wants. What will Brown do if Trump sees something on Fox News about some class at Brown that pisses him off, and orders the funding turned off again? The school will run to court, waving this agreement. Either a right-wing higher court will give them an adverse ruling, or the Trump administration will blow off or drag its feet complying with a ruling in the school's favor, or the Trump administration will simply find another convenient way of persecuting the school. The Trump administration does not care about the law. They care about their own will. This agreement includes provisions like, "Nothing in this Agreement prevents the United States (even during the period of the Agreement) from conducting subsequent compliance reviews, investigations, or litigation into Brown's future admissions practices occurring entirely after the Effective Date of this Agreement to ensure that those practices are in full compliance with all applicable laws and not a proxy for prohibited discrimination."

A lawyer may tell you that this means something solid, but to the Trump administration it means "we will just come back and say you are guilty of more stuff in the future if you piss us off." The belief that legalese will offer any protection from the White House is a very pre-2024 notion. Wake up.

We are going to see repeats of this deal, at America's most prestigious institutions of higher learning, for weeks and months to come. We will hear varied explanations for these deals from the leaders of these institutions, but all of them will come down to the same thing as Brown. They are doing this to try to appease the Trump administration. One year ago, all of the leaders of all of these schools would have said that all or almost all of the demands that they are now agreeing to are unreasonable and contrary to the dearly held values of the universities. Now, they have signed their names on the line. If Trump had demanded that these schools agree that 1+1=3 in order to have their funding restored, you can be sure that the schools would have done so, while adding a sub-clause noting that they have only the highest respect for the concept of mathematical truth.

Which brings us to the most important thing to be said about what is happening here: These schools do not believe in anything. A fuller way to say this is that, like many institutions that come to thrive under capitalism, these schools do not have any ideological values other than their own flourishing. In the case of private corporations, this quality is taken for granted—they exist to serve their own interests. But in the case of universities, this conclusion is obscured by a thicket of declarations about the timeless nature of education and learning and knowledge and serving the values of mankind. Still, the actions of the schools tell the full story. They define their own survival as the highest inherent good. Therefore they will pay whatever price is necessary to punch their own ticket to the future. They will throw as many people overboard as necessary in order to ensure that the ship itself continues sailing. If you are trying to figure out the ideological beliefs of America's most respected institutes of higher education, you will come

S THAT OTHING

NEIL CONSTANTINE

closest to the truth by concluding that they do not have any ideology at all.

This is why it is certain that the Trump administration will crush them as much as it chooses to. The schools are non-ideological contestants in an ideological battle. They are hollow shells facing iron wrecking balls. Their opponents may be bigoted, deranged, power-mad, and dishonest, but they believe in something. The schools believe only in self-perpetuation. It is easy to understand how this dynamic inevitably causes the schools to acquiesce to increasingly outrageous demands. They have no ideological firewall blocking their own retreat. They have no philosophical reason to say to themselves, "Stop giving in at this point." They will always give in, sell out, accede to whatever they think is necessary to preserve what they can of what they have. You can see in university presidents the same quality that you see in many business CEOs: They envision their own task not as vision and leadership towards a higher goal, but as one of balancing the competing demands of various stakeholders in the least damaging way possible. When there is a stakeholder—in this case, the US government—that is ideologically driven to go beyond reasonableness, institutions that do not have any equal and opposite ideological drive of their own find themselves pushed backwards. That is what we see in higher education, right now.

This is not an effort to be cool or edgy; nor does this understanding deny the many positive effects of the research and education carried out by these universities. It just acknowledges that those positive effects are incidental, rather than core to the universities' purpose, in the same way that "great customer service" is incidental to the underlying purpose of a bank. None of this is surprising, exactly – Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences is named after Ron Desantis's biggest financial backer, for fuck's sake – but it can be jarring if you had believed, before now, that all of the stuff that the schools said about timeless values was true. To see the hallowed Ivy League, the self-proclaimed keepers of liberalism's flame, lining up to agree to persecute particular disfavored minorities, throw out all institutional efforts at economic and racial diversity, and pay bribes to an aspiring dictator may feel a bit, you know, disappointing. But you are only experiencing that unpleasant feeling because you believe in something. Stop doing that, and you can feel free to share in the prestige that these institutions enjoy.

Veritas, cowards.

This article originally appeared at hamiltonnolan.com as "How to Negotiate with Terrorists, Unsuccessfully."

HEROES: *Columbia students who ignited a nationwide wave of Gaza solidarity encampments are arrested on the campus lawn in April 2024. The refusal of university leaders to defend their students' right to protest was the first of many capitulations to outside rightwing groups that would follow.*

CUNY PROFS FIGHT BACK

PAUL FRANGIPANE

By Elsie Carson-Holt

When S, a faculty member at Brooklyn College opened an email from HR in June, the last thing she thought was that she was going to be let go from her position as adjunct professor.

"I had been scheduled by my department to teach two classes in the fall, and so I reached out to the person who is in charge of scheduling," S explained. "He believed that the email from HR was a mistake, because he was also planning for me to teach those two classes."

S (who is speaking on the condition of anonymity out of fear of doxxing and harassment) soon learned she and three others had been unceremoniously fired. All were active within the campus' Palestine movement.

"We knew it had nothing to do with our job performance or our student evaluations, or any concerns about our quality of instruction," said S. "We're all in different departments. We're in different programs. The only thing that we have in common is our activism."

T, another faculty member who was fired, said "I'm an excellent professor. My student evaluations are stellar… all of the evaluations I've gotten from fellow faculty who come to observe me are stellar, and yet that doesn't matter to the CUNY administration."

When CUNY Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez testified in front of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development committee on July 15th he confirmed this, telling a republican representative "we have terminated four individuals on the faculty or staff for violating our policies on antisemitism," something that T described as making the termination of herself and her three other colleagues "a trophy to placate the right."

"I'm Jewish. I'm not engaged in antisemitic acts. I'm engaged in protest against a genocide. I think it's disgusting that anyone would be fired for being on the side of life," S said in response to the Chancellor's words.

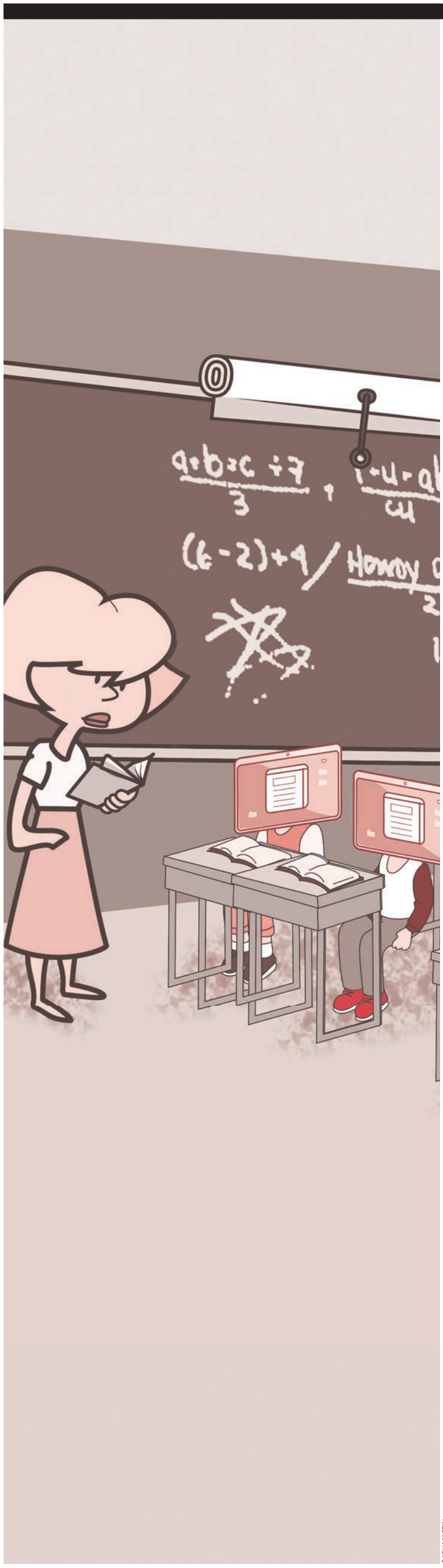
On July 31, in the middle of a torrential downpour that caused the city to declare a state of emergency, 150 CUNY faculty, staff, local politicians and supporters protested outside Brooklyn College's Bedford Gates to speak out against the removal of four Brooklyn College faculty.

CUNY UNDER ATTACK: *James Davis, president of the Professional Staff Congress-CUNY, speaks at a July 31 rally in support of four fired professors at Brooklyn College.*

Alexandra Juhasz, a distinguished professor of film at Brooklyn College spoke on behalf of her colleagues at the protest. "It's a matter of the integrity of the workplace…but we also know that they were fired for their organizing and vocal expression for Palestine," she told *The Indy*. "So the organizing around their firing has also been focused on our rights as faculty members to have political expression outside the classroom."

Both T and S emphasized the precarity of adjunct professors' financial situations in general, and described the stress of having to job search so unexpectedly, calling the situation "nerve wracking," particularly leading up to the Chancellor's testimony in Washington.

"CUNY has been my home for many years," said S. "I earned my undergraduate degree at Brooklyn College. I earned my graduate degree at Brooklyn College. I taught there for a year and a half. "This was really my community and my home. It's extremely painful."



GARY MARTIN

EDUCATO BE AI A

WHY THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCHOOLS IS DANGEROUS AND SHOULD NOT BE WELCOMED

By Ben Mankoff

A high school teacher in New York City welcomes a new student from Haiti into their Global History class in the middle of a school year. This student reads only very basic English, and no one in the school speaks their native language of Haitian Creole. The teacher has to rapidly adapt course materials for their new student, and AI promises to be the most efficient tool for doing so. The teacher takes a short reading on the Industrial Revolution that discusses its effects on the Dominican Republic (where a majority of her students have recent ancestry) and asks ChatGPT to adapt it into simplified English, citing examples from Haitian history to make it more relevant to the new student. The AI program does this in a flash, and the Haitian student understands the lesson and is able to complete its accompanying short-response assignment at the same time as their peers. The course can move on, flow with no disruption.

The scenario above aggregates classroom situations in which New York City Public School teachers could imagine an appropriate use of generative artificial intelligence, or AI. Single instances such as this, in which GenAI seems to solve a classroom problem, are often put forth by the most well-meaning educators to defend adopting the technology's adoption in schools, while "AI can be a tool for equity and accessibility" is the alluring promise made by ed-tech companies to progressive educators, recruiting them to welcome the technology into their classrooms.

One must credit a teacher who recognizes a student facing a challenge in their classroom. Better yet, this teacher deals with the challenge in ways that allow them to meet the bureaucratic and social demands of their workplace. Nonetheless, we should ask ourselves the following: is AI the necessary solution to this challenge? And what other problems does its use bring with it?

Accepting ed-tech companies' promises of equity and accessibility presents at least four problems, as I will argue below. These arguments are aimed at the clarifying the problems associated with the use of AI by educators and school systems, not by students themselves.

First, there is little evidence that the best education is one that is precisely tailored, Netflix-like, to students' existing preferences, beliefs, tastes and biases, especially when attention to the lived experience of the student is delivered by an algorithm rather than a caring teacher. This is an argument against the use of GenAI, even if it works exactly as advertised.

Second, there is a mountain of evidence that AI systems reproduce the prejudices, biases and prevailing ideologies of the social systems from which their data has been extracted. The opacity of these systems renders them unacceptable for use in schools.

Third, while those critical of AI use by students recognize its detrimental effects on building skills like critical thinking, they are less likely to recognize that these effects can be corrosive to the skills that adults have already built. "I've been teaching for a decade without AI, so I know good lessons when I see them and can effectively use ChatGPT to brainstorm lesson plans," goes the argument. This perspective misses the very real de-skilling that occurs in adults with the introduction of automated tools.

Finally, there is persuasive evidence that AI is primarily a system of control for the owners of the technology far more than it is a tool for the liberation of its users.

NETFLIX, BUT FOR SCHOOLS!

A number of convincing arguments hold that Netflix exercises a negative influence over both the aesthetics of cinema and the business of film production. The promise of efficient delivery of content through algorithmically determined profiles of the viewer (justified to funders as cost-effective and to viewers as increasing "representation") has led to the devaluing of communal experiences like theatrical films or watercooler television — as well as to the devaluing of the labor that produces the content in whatever form it is delivered. Netflix was able to establish its dominance of entertainment by using the zero-interest funding that flowed into Silicon Valley in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis to prioritize growth and accumulation of users over profitability. It is this same financial situation that positioned tech firms to make further incursions into every realm of life, from transportation to education, carrying the imperative of infinite growth along with them.

Building monopolies by offering free services has been the practice of technology companies for ages. Capitalism's tendency towards monopoly is supercharged by software; just ask anyone who has attempted to leave Instagram or Facebook. All your friends are there. We can observe that the same effects operate in ed-tech, such as in Microsoft and Google's duopoly in New York City schools. How can we resist Gemini, Google's AI mod-

ORS SHOULD NTAGONISTS

el, when all of our students and teachers already rely on Google Classroom?

But let's say you are not concerned about concentrated power or the flow of capital from public institutions to private corporations as long as the tools offered by this situation are useful in the classroom. It still remains to be proven that course material differentiated to the greatest possible degree is beneficial to any learner. For instance, one of the premises of personalized learning is that it is always better to teach to students' "learning styles." But according to cognitive scientist Daniel T. Willingham, there is insufficient evidence to support the idea that tailoring instruction to individuals' learning styles is actually effective.

Personalized learning resulting in better education has been the promise of the computer industry since its inception, but that promise remains unrealized. For instance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development found in 2015 that the introduction of desktop computers into classrooms had little benefits for learning.

Everything is a trade-off; automation always has a cost, and there is reason to think that AI-adapted materials push that cost onto the student. As education researcher M.G. Prezioso recently wrote, "AI-adapted materials may not be the best way to improve reading outcomes. Students need access to complex texts with varied sentence structures and sophisticated language to support reading comprehension development. AI-generated writing, by contrast, can be syntactically repetitive and stylistically flat."

There is evidence that personalized learning can produce gains in fact acquisition, under certain circumstances. But there is no evidence to suggest that personalized learning does anything special to support critical thinking, inquiry, or cooperative knowledge production — the core democratic promises of public education. Personalized learning employs techniques such as "chunking" texts to make the delivery of the information in those texts more manageable. This technique fails to produce the kind of engagement and skill building that deep reading does, skills that make up the foundation of critical thinking, metacognition and reflection, which support education's democratic mission. Individual skill-building, on the other hand, supports education's parallel mission of producing workers that the current day's economy demands.

Treating personalization as the end goal of educational encounters tends to lead educators away from communal learning experiences. Rather than efficiently working our hypothetical new Haitian student into the existing course plan, another route would be to recognize the opportunity for important discussions to be had among students about the intertwined histories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic and the role industrialization has played in those histories.

While it has some narrow benefits, personalized learning brings with it dangerous goals of efficiency. AI-mediated personalized learning, taken to the extreme as its boosters would like, would serve to extinguish the benefits of group learning. At best, AI ed-tech providers envision the teacher's role as an intermediary step in which the work of personalization is assisted by an AI that will eventually, through increased surveillance and data capture, be smart enough to do the work without a teacher at all.

THE AI WORLD IS FLAT

Human beings, teachers included, come with their own biases, no doubt, but it is the variation, the diversity, of those biases within a classroom and school building that helps correct for that bias. An encounter between a teacher with a bias and a student who challenges that bias ultimately deepens the learning experience for both. AI flattens difference by design and privileges the prejudices and biases of the statistical average of the dataset.

It has been demonstrated in study after study that Large Language Models (LLMs), the bases for most systems we mean when we refer to AI, reproduce the biases of their datasets. This is not a bug but a feature of the LLM. Tech companies have methods for counteracting this bias, but those methods are informed by the interests of the companies themselves. Bias is inescapable, yet AI is presented as objective and omniscient.

MORE EMPATHY, CRITICAL THINKING AND DEEP COMPREHENSION IS WHAT WE REALLY NEED.

You will often hear the refrain, "AI is like any other tool; what matters is how you use it." Do not be fooled. In truth, AI is a collection of tools such as neural networks, transformers, silicon, and circuit boards, generative LLM chatbots, data centers, and many more. When we talk about AI in education, we are talking about a collection of tools, organized in very particular ways with very particular purposes. Even if we assume that the development of the technologies that comprise AI are inevitable (a claim worth interrogating), there is nothing inevitable about how those technologies are assembled or to what ends. The technologies that make up AI, and in fact most digital tools, are usually opaque to the individual user. They are the results of vast resource and production networks, and they are intricately, atomically designed and built by equally intricate machines. The "just a tool" line calls to mind a simple machine, such as a lever, that can be improvised from nearly any material and used by nearly anyone. Nothing could be further from the assemblage of technologies we call AI, which are almost universally wielded by corporations beholden to a legal imperative to maximize profits.

Considered in this light, this assemblage of tools presents the troubling scenario in which authoritarian governments in partnership with technology companies conduct massive re-education through the manipulation of the AI systems we are inviting into schools. Donald Trump is currently repurposing the Department of Education, issuing executive orders about what content is to be allowed in public schools alongside other orders aimed at increasing AI's presence in K-12 education. OpenAI's recent partnership with Instructure, "the world's largest ed-tech ecosystem," all but ensures that the same company contracting with the U.S. military, and therefore certain to adhere to the Trump administration's new dictates on acceptable content, will be providing AI education services to millions of American students.

THE ADULTS IN THE ROOM

More and more workers are relying on AI to help them rewrite emails to sound more professional. One administrator I spoke to told me they received 17 emails over spring break from an angry parent wanting to know if their child was failing a class. This information had been given to the parent already, and the administrator was understandably feeling frustrated. They drafted an email that didn't hold back their feelings, then had ChatGPT revise it into something more polite, something that was less likely to exacerbate the situation. This administrator, who is critical of AI use in schools, chalked up this case as a win for AI. But was this not a lost opportunity for the practice of empathy? (If emotional losses are hard to quantify, there is research that shows that the use of generative AI like ChatGPT has a significant effect on critical thinking, through a process of cognitive offloading.)

It is hard to blame an overworked administrator who is accountable for the efficiency of their workplace for not wanting to spend her mental energy dealing with a stubborn parent. But the existence of this problem has social roots, not technical ones, and technical solutions have the overall effect of draining empathy from the educational experience while leaving the social causes unaddressed by the governments who contract with ed-tech companies.

There is a long history of automated tools serving to de-skill a workforce, and there is recent research on automation in South Korea that suggests that, far from simply augmenting human labor, as many tools do, software in particular primarily serves to replace it. The replacement of labor with an AI god is the express goal of the companies building AI, and in the case of education, this would represent a massive shift of public funding from labor to capital. Instead of paying more teachers more money to improve student outcomes, governments are paying private cor-

Continued on page 19

REJECTING THE SOUTHERNIFICATION OF DOCTOR KING

King of the North: Martin Luther King Jr's Life of Struggle Outside the South
By Jeanne Theoharis
The New Press, March 2025, 400 pages

By Renée Feltz

Historian Jeanne Theoharis was in Los Angeles, souring old copies of Black newspapers for coverage of the city's Civil Rights Movement, when she was surprised to find reports on the many visits Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King made there years before the 1965 Watts uprising.

"I'd bought into the idea that it had taken the Watts uprising to jolt King to turn his attention to Northern struggles," Theoharis notes. "But it simply wasn't the case."

The author of a dozen other books on the Civil Rights era - including *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks*. Theoharis spent the next 15 years delving deeper into the archives of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and found King joining local movements to challenge "police brutality, housing and school segregation, job exclusion and union discrimination" in northern cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit, Boston, Milwaukee, and Cleveland.

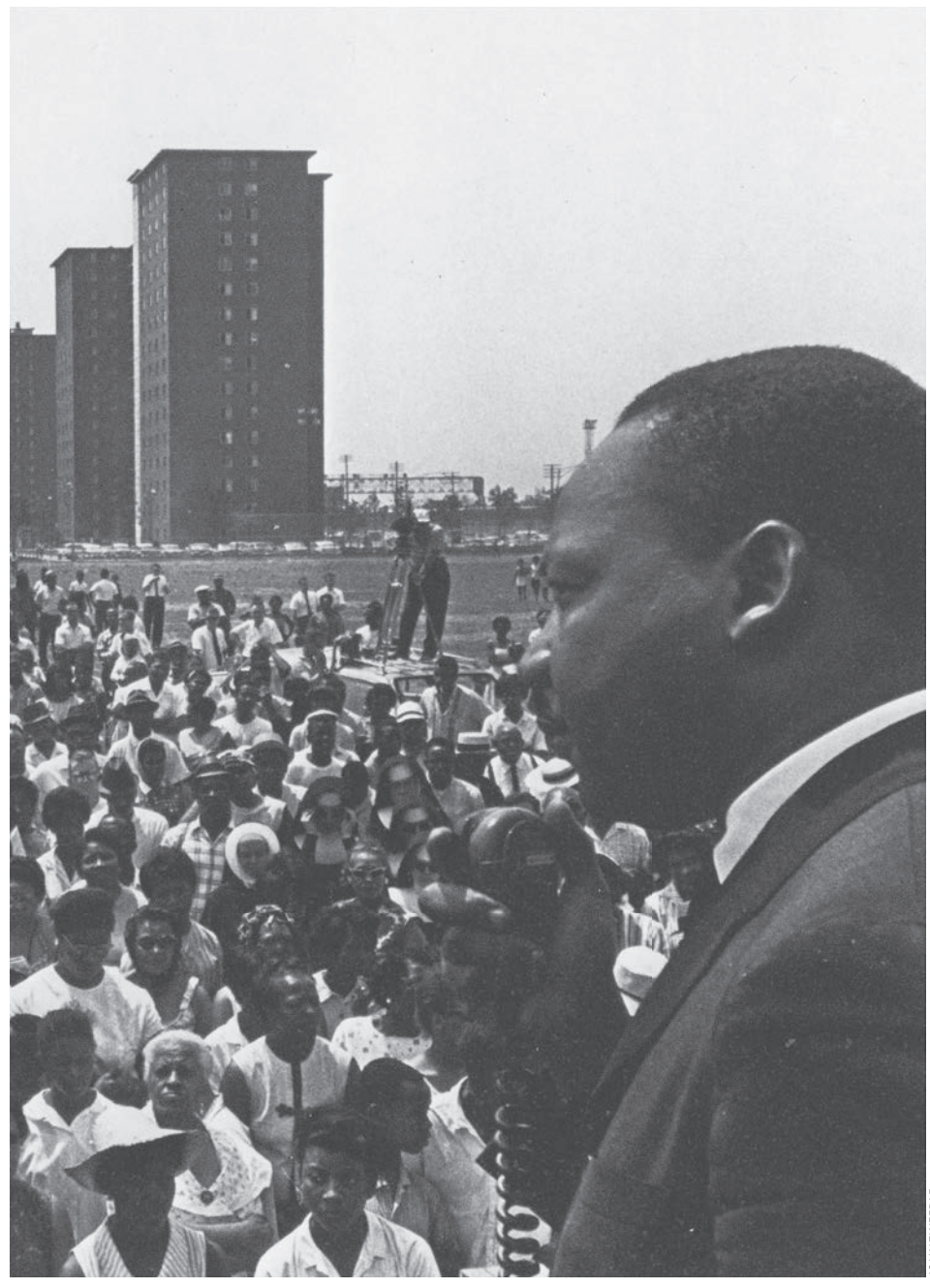
The fruit of this labor by Theoharis, a leading movement historian and activist herself who follows in the footsteps of Howard Zinn, is a seminal book that radically reexamines an intensely studied man and his legacy. "King did not simply turn radical at the end of his life," Theoharis shows, "a structural analysis of racism and the myriad institutions that supported it animated his and Coretta Scott King's adult life."

Through fascinating details drawn from myriad sources - including transcripts of FBI wiretaps - Theoharis critiques the "Southernification of King" as a leader who only appealed to Southern Black people, and shows how the corporate media was a "hostile source" that propped up "myths that flattered Northern white sensibilities." Until now, these same myths dominated historical accounts of King.

As with the South, Black people who moved "North" - West, North and East - found laws barring discrimination were largely symbolic. When King organized on these issues, he found support, even if this work was often ignored by the major newspapers who readily made space for critics of King like NAACP president Roy Wilkins.

When King organized the Chicago Freedom Movement in 1966, he also faced skepticism from his own colleagues in the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC). But he insisted on moving his family to the city's impoverished West Side, where they experienced how housing and schools in the country's second largest city at the time were as segregated as in Birmingham, Alabama.

King found the Chicago campaign against school segregation - which included a 1963 protest where a young Bernie Sanders was arrested - to be "vibrant, vigorous, and relentless" and later said "if it had been somewhere in the South, change would have ensued." King also supported radical student boycotts, calling them "one of the most creative nonviolent methods developed to dramatize the intolerable conditions" in city schools, even as local Black congressmen and aldermen tried to discredit them under pressure from Democratic Mayor Richard Daley, who was supported by Democratic President Lyndon Johnson.



JOHN TWEEDLE

RALLYING HOPE: *Martin Luther King Jr. speaks to a crowd at the Robert Taylor Houses in Chicago.*

Also in Chicago, King connected with gang leaders for the first annual Turfmasters Conference, contradicting reports they were at odds, and laying the groundwork Fred Hampton later continued with the Black Panthers. Meanwhile, King visited and strategized with other Black Power leaders to build a broadbased, confrontational movement that harnessed black political power, and critiqued colonialism at home and abroad. Amiri Baraka's wife was so surprised when King stopped by their home in Newark, New Jersey that she said, "If I had known he was coming, I would have baked a cake." Baraka was inspired in part by King to organize the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, which Scott King addressed along with fellow movement widow, Betty Shabazz.

Theoharis makes sure to document Scott King's role in the duo's life of service that connected the struggles of poverty, racism and militarism. A longtime member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, she was the only woman to address one of the first big rallies against the U.S. involvement in Vietnam at Madison Square Garden in 1965. A reporter asked King: "Did you educate her?" He responded: "No, she educated me." Scott King later refused to let "the men," as she called the SCLC's leadership, run things after her husband was assassinated, and continued to support the Poor People's Campaign.

Many King biographers chronicle when King railed against the Vietnam War in his "Beyond Vietnam" speech at Riverside Church, but few note his earlier work in New York City or appear to have read his regular column in the Amsterdam News. He worked with Puerto Rican and Jewish activists as well as Black grassroots organizers, and refused to be used by the mayor to quiet them down as they challenged the city's liberals to recognize how segregation had led to a crisis of "inadequate and inferior education" in the city's school system.

When King led similar campaigns in Birmingham, he famously saw results. But throughout the North, Theoharis shows how "this multivarious nonviolent movement garnered little change or even acknowledgement" and contributed to the unrest that exploded throughout these same Northern cities in the late-1960s.

In a February 1966 column for the Chicago Defender titled, "My Dream," Theoharis quotes King as he "challenged the passive voice that many preferred that masked the patterns of exploitation" and referenced Langston Hughes' question 'what happens to a dream deferred?"

King wrote: "[T]hese dreams were not deferred, they were denied and repudiated by vicious though subtle patterns of exploitations. So the dreams do not 'dry up like raisins in the sun.' They decay like sun-ripend oranges that are devoured by worms and birds until they fall to the ground making a rotten mess."

Within a week of King's 1968 assassination, the federal government passed the Fair Housing Act, which outlawed discriminatory housing practices and enabled some Blacks to move into better conditions. Before being martyred, King had expressed great frustration when asked to respond to the earlier uprisings he had essentially predicted. This landmark book about a role model for so many ensures we see his work to challenge racism, police brutality, poverty and unequal housing as a national effort, not relegated to the South, or the past.

Reneé Feltz is News Director at Democracy Now!

AI IN THE SCHOOLS

Continued from page 17

porations to replace teachers with poor simulations of teachers.

There is nothing paranoid or conspiratorial about this. It's happening in the open, and people like OpenAI CEO Sam Altman are explicit that their technologies are designed to replace workers on a massive scale. Even if the technology fails to live up to its promises, that isn't stopping the replacement from happening. Just like the mechanical looms that replaced weavers in the earliest days of industrialization, the work-product is inferior but as long as capital is successfully redistributed up to the owners of capital, the replacement will continue.

DATA COLONIALISM

Alongside the reproduction of social inequalities through algorithms, the data-fication of education represents an extension and evolution of colonial domination. As Ulises Ali Mejias and Nick Couldry argue in their 2024 book *Data Grab*, data extraction by corporations with the support of governments is a direct descendant of colonial systems of oppression.

As Timnit Gebru, the prominent AI researcher who was fired from Google for exposing the biases of its algorithms has argued, AI itself has roots in eugenic movements.

Ideologically and financially influential people like billionaire venture capitalist Peter Thiel have expressed the belief that humanity's biological and mental frailties must be overcome through technological means. Eugenics traditionally understood is the selective breeding of humanity. In the hands of people like Thiel, it becomes like technologically-driven human extinctionism, as revealed in his interview with Ross Douthat in which he cannot straight-forwardly say that he thinks the human species should continue to exist.

In his 2024 book, *Access is Capture*, Roderic Crooks argues that ed-tech programs generate great profits for the owners of the technology while doing little to change the outcomes of the students to whom they are supposedly bringing equality of opportunity. In fact, Crooks argues, the effect of these programs is to use public funds to turn minoritized students into sites of data extraction for the benefit of the technology industry. Ed-tech companies often require the schools that use their tools to enter into agreements that share students' data.

'AI IS THE FUTURE; WE MUST EMBRACE IT.'

There is no guarantee that time or research will inevitably resolve any of the issues presented in this article. A typical refrain heard from AI boosters is that the technology "is the worst it will ever be," suggesting that its problems are only one or two innovations away from being solved. Yet OpenAI's latest release, its o3 "reasoning" model, is incorrect at a higher rate than its most recent predecessors.

The builders of these tools make compelling comments about how technological and social progress are one and the same. This idea serves to bring ever greater realms of society under their control, entrenching inequalities.

It is irresponsible to say, "AI is the future; we must embrace it." This is such a broad statement that it hardly means anything, and yet it is often where the conversations in schools stop, opening the door far too wide for tech companies to enter through.

Students are already surrounded by screens, their attention shredded, their critical thinking and empathy skills diminished by AI-generated slop. As librarians, we should nurture the skills that will guard students against the flood of misinformation: specifically, deep reading and organizing their thoughts through writing.

We don't have to shame students or teachers for using AI, but we should push back against the notion that the best way to deal with the disastrous information ecosystem created by AI is to immerse ourselves in it. It is better to practice the literate life, to respond to our students ourselves, with all our flaws, even if using ChatGPT could make course materials more "responsive." It is more important that students are responded to by a human being than it is that the response be as efficient as possible. Educators should reinforce this approach, and not give in to pressures about preparing students for a world of work defined by AI.

If our care for students is unmediated by algorithms, if we nurture their skills of critical thinking and reflection, then they will do just fine navigating whatever world awaits.

Ban Mankoff is a New York City public school librarian.

Theater for the New City

FREE!

PRESENTS:

SUMMER STREET THEATER TOUR:
HOME SWEET HOME OR A LIFE IN NEW YORK
Book and Lyrics by Crystal Field with music composed by Peter Dizozza

Sat. 8/2 • 2 pm • Manhattan • TNC at E. 10th St. & First Ave.
Sun. 8/3 • 2 pm • Bronx • St. Mary's Park at 147th St. & St. Ann's Ave.
Sat. 8/9 • 2 pm •Staten Island • Tappen Park, Bay St. betw. 77th & 78th Sts.
Sun. 8/10 • 2 pm • Manhattan • Central Park Bandshell, 72nd Street Crosswalk
Fri. 8/15 • 5 pm • Brooklyn • Coney Island Boardwalk at W. 21st St.
Sat. 8/16 • 2 pm • Manhattan • St. Marks Church at E. 10th St. & Second Ave.
Sun. 8/17 • 2 pm • Manhattan • Jackie Robinson Park at W. 147th St. & Bradhurst Ave.
Sat. 8/23 • 2 pm • Manhattan • Washington Square Park
Sun. 8/24 • 2 pm • Queens • Travers Park at 34th Ave. betw. 77th & 78th Sts
Sat. 9/6 • 2 pm • Brooklyn • Sunset Park at 6th Ave. & 44th St.
Sun. 9/7 • 2pm • Brooklyn • Fort Greene Park, Myrtle Avenue & St. Edwards Street
Sat. 9/13 • 2 pm • Manhattan• Sol Bloom Playground, W. 91st Street btwn. Columbus & Central Park West
9/14 • 2pm • Manhattan • Tompkins Square Park at E. 7th St. & Ave. A

FREE!

THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY

For more info,
call (212) 254-1109 or visit theaterforthenewcity.net

Law and Disorder radio

Listen to the show each week and download podcasts at
lawanddisorder.org

"Law And Disorder *is an excellent magazine-format radio show hosted by five progressive lawyers."*

AMY GOODMAN
Host, Democracy Now!

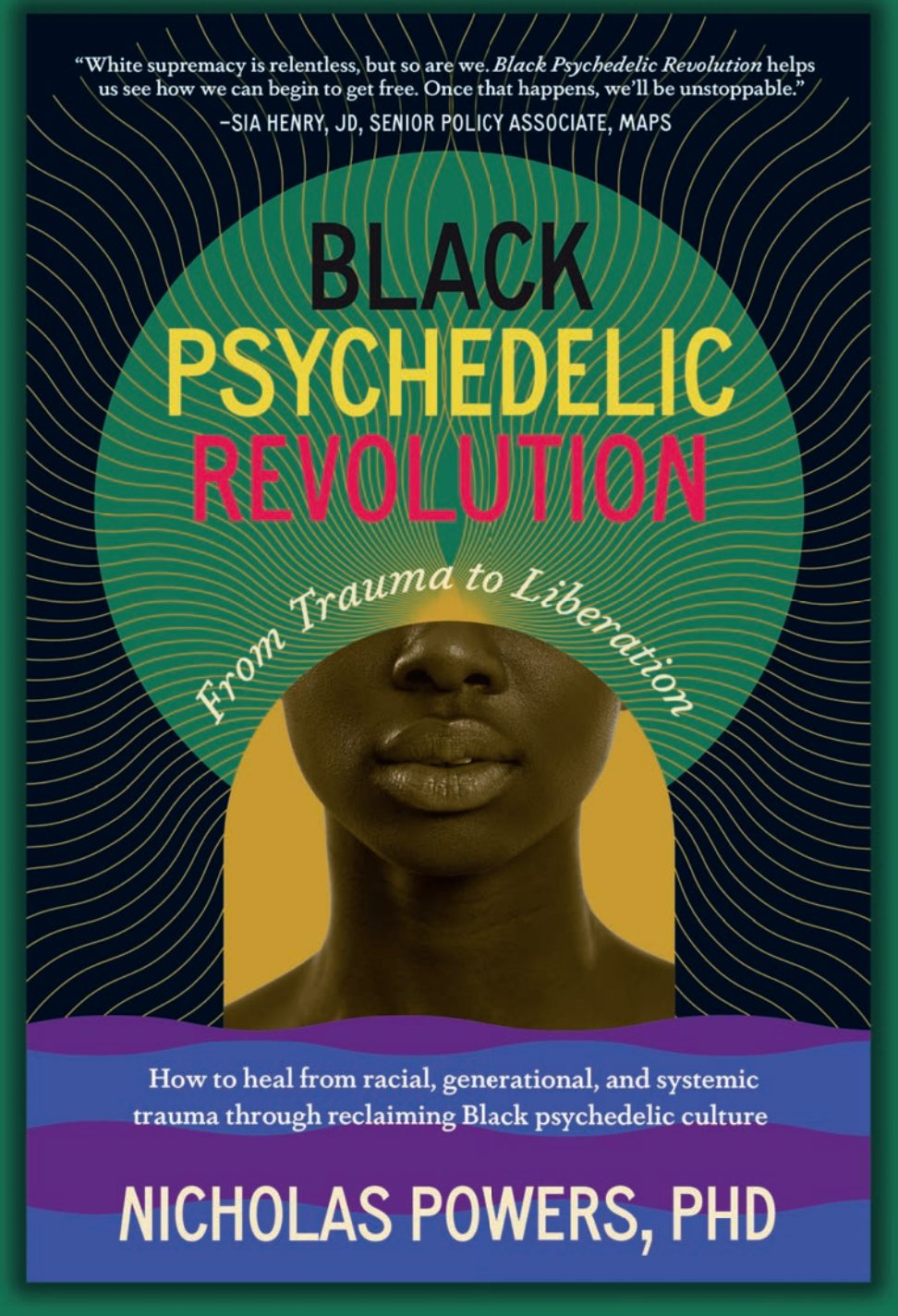
Law And Disorder **is as radical as reality itself. We broadcast on 151 stations around the country. We believe that ultimately capitalism is not compatible with democracy, fascism is. We chronicle the crisis of crashing democratic and economic rights in America and talk to people about "what is to be done." We broadcast a one-hour show every week.**

NOW ON FACEBOOK.COM

SUBSCRIBE TO THE INDY

$33 — 10 ISSUES
DELIVERED STRAIGHT TO YOUR HOME EVERY MONTH
INDYPENDENT.ORG/DONATE
OR SEND A CHECK TO
THE INDYPENDENT//388 ATLANTIC AVE., 2ND FL.//BROOKLYN, NY 11217

BLACK BEAUTY. BLACK POSSIBILITY. BLACK POWER.


"White supremacy is relentless, but so are we. *Black Psychedelic Revolution* helps us see how we can begin to get free. Once that happens, we'll be unstoppable."
–SIA HENRY, JD, SENIOR POLICY ASSOCIATE, MAPS
BLACK
PSYCHEDELIC
REVOLUTION
From Trauma to Liberation
How to heal from racial, generational, and systemic trauma through reclaiming Black psychedelic culture
NICHOLAS POWERS, PHD

Get 25% off plus free shipping* with code REVOLUTION from www.northatlanticbooks.com.

How psychedelics can heal historical, intergenerational, and racialized trauma—an Afrofuturistic take on Black psychedelia toward joy and liberation

Legal Notice: Offer valid while supplies last. Limit one discount code per person. Valid for one transaction. Discount code is not redeemable for cash, is non-transferable and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or discount. Valid on www.northatlanticbooks.com for print format only. US mailing address required. Expires April 1, 2025.